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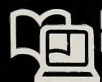


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ENGLISH 13

UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE- REAL AND IMAGINARY



Distance
Learning

MODULE 3

Alberta
EDUCATION

English 13

Module 3

**UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE –
REAL AND IMAGINARY**



English 13
Student Module
Module 3
Understanding People – Real and Imaginary
Alberta Distance Learning Centre
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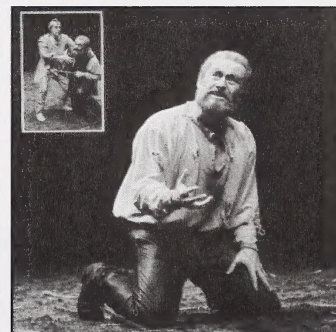
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CITADEL THEATRE

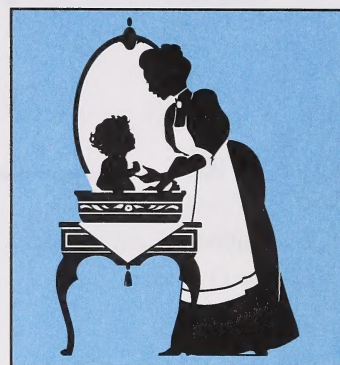
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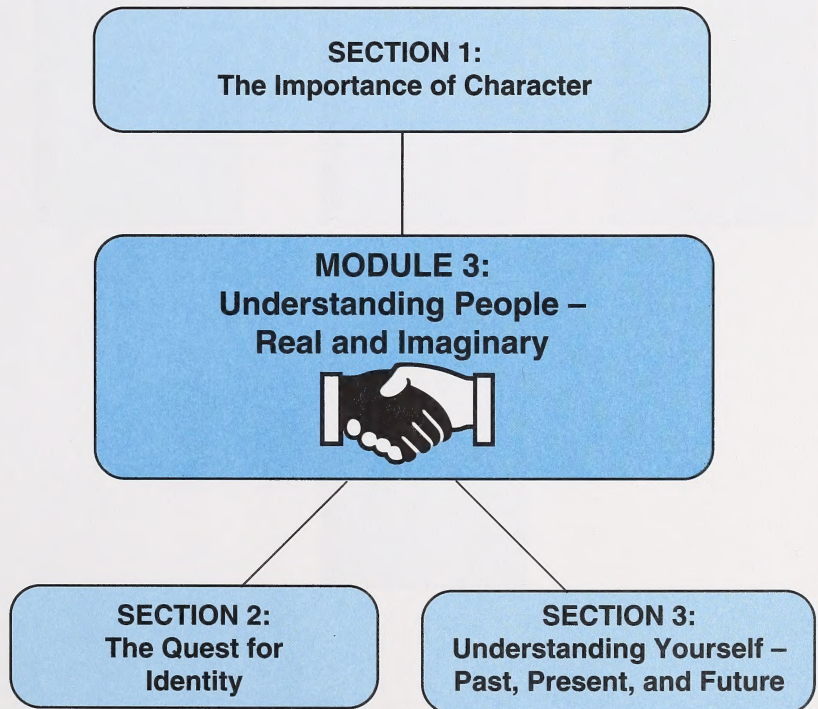
OVERVIEW



Imagine for a moment that you are the last person on earth. At first, this might seem like a pleasant idea. Just think: No more lineups. No one to tell you what to do. And you could have your pick of new clothes. On the other hand, what would you do with yourself all day? Whose phone number would you dial on Friday night? Even a lone wolf likes to know that there is someone to hear his call.

Obviously, a world without other people wouldn't be much fun. The same would be true for a story without characters. Fortunately, both the world around you and the world of literature are full of interesting characters. In this module you will have the chance to explore your understanding of people – both real and imaginary. Among other things, you will develop a better understanding of such terms as *character* and *conflict*, *fiction* and *non-fiction*, *poetry* and *drama*. You will have the chance to sharpen your viewing skills by examining the world of people in pictures. And you will try to enhance your understanding of the characters you meet by exploring the three different levels of comprehension in literature.

In short, you should find that this module is loaded with *personality*.



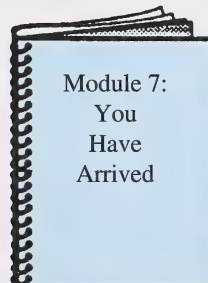
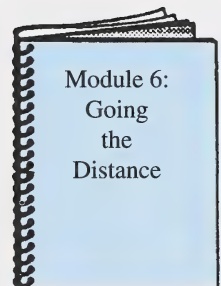
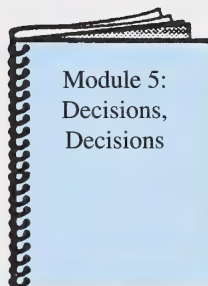
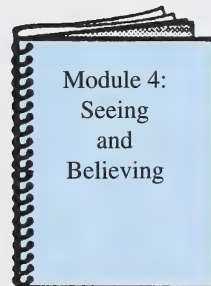
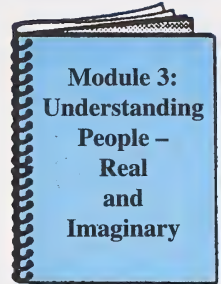
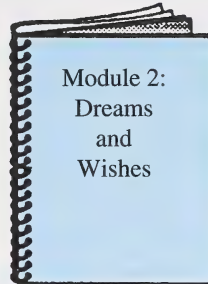
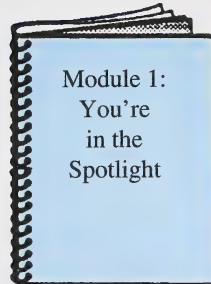
Evaluation

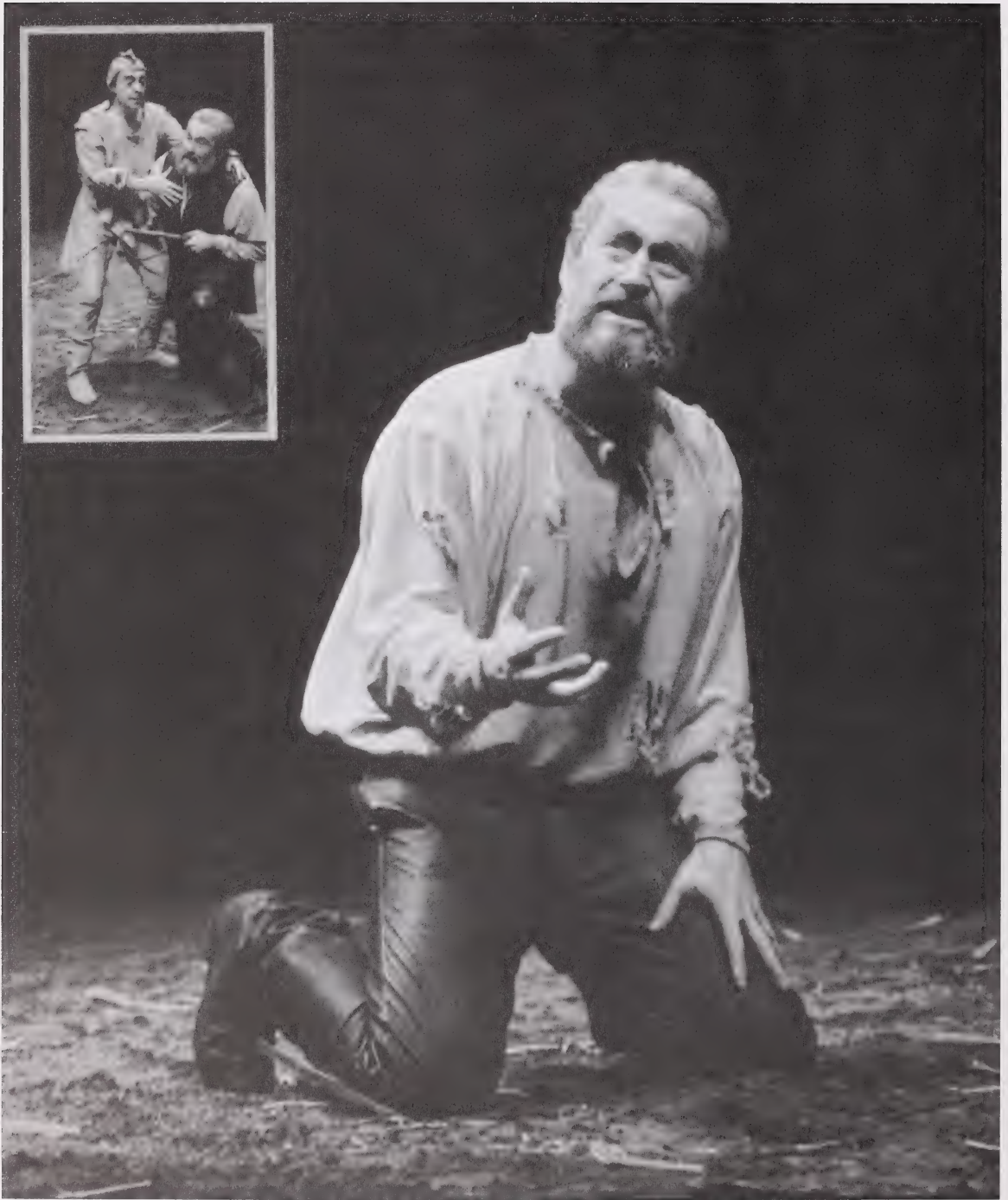
Your mark in this module will be determined by your work in the Assignment Booklet, which contains three section assignments and one final module assignment. The mark distribution is as follows:

Section 1 Assignment	25%
Section 2 Assignment	20%
Section 3 Assignment	25%
Final Module Assignment	30%
Total	100%

Course Overview

English 13 contains seven modules.





CITADEL THEATRE

SECTION

1

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER



Have you ever read a story but didn't care about any of the characters? If you have, chances are you never made it through to the end of the story. After all, why go to a hockey game if you don't care who wins or loses?

Most of us read a story for the people, to see who they are, what they think, what they do. When characters interest us, we want to read on to see what happens to them.

In this section, you will look at the importance of character, and at what a writer must do to create an interesting characterization. You will also examine the importance of conflict in helping to maintain our interest in a character throughout a story. In the last part of the section, you will see how character and emotion are created in examples of visual communication.

Activity 1: What Makes a Character Interesting?

When I write a story, should I make sure I describe my characters near the beginning of the story?

Even when you tell someone a story, your listener will probably get bored if you spend a long time describing where the story took place. You want to keep your listener or reader's attention, so try to make him or her interested in your characters as soon as you can.



Most stories begin this way. When you read a story or watch a film, you first find out the setting – that is, where and when the story is taking place. (You learned about setting in Module 2.) In this section, you will be concerned mainly with the *who* of a story – the people or characters.

A good story teller knows the importance of making characters interesting to the reader. It doesn't matter how clever the plot is – if the readers don't care about the characters, they won't care about the story either.

Do all the characters in a story have to be interesting?



Not all of them have to be interesting. Only the important ones. Characters in a story are really no different from people in real life – some are more interesting than others, some we get to know better than others, some we like more than others.



*So how does a story teller
get you interested in a
particular character?*

In real life, you tend to notice people who are in some way different or original in their actions, their behaviour, their attitude, or their appearance. The same is true in a story.

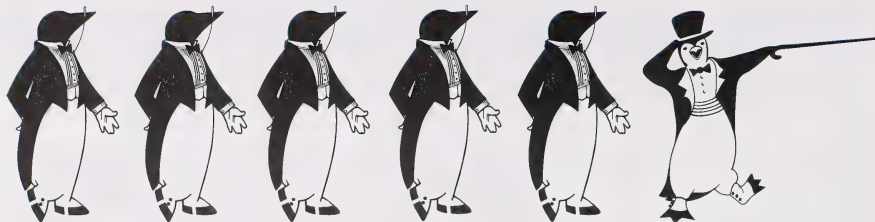


For example, turn to page 19 in *Fast Forward* and look carefully at “The Far Side” cartoon.

Even though the cartoonist uses penguins as his subjects, he wants you to look at them more as people than as penguins. As you examine the cartoon, compare the penguin in the middle with the rest of the colony.

1. Why is the penguin in the middle of the picture more interesting than the other penguins? What makes him (or her?) stand out from the other penguins?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 1.



Certainly, the singing penguin is the sort who stands apart from the crowd and this helps to make him an interesting character. Now it's your turn to try to create such a character.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Write a description of a person whom you would describe as interesting. The person could be a friend or a relative or perhaps somebody famous.

If you prefer, you could write your description of this interesting person in the form of a poem. If you completed the Extra Help in Module 1, Section 3 you wrote an "I am" poem in which you attempted to describe yourself in all your interesting variety. You may want to adapt this "I am" poem into a "He is" or "She is" poem.

Before writing, ask yourself the following: What makes the person interesting? Is the person different or unique in some way? Does the person do or say things that make him or her stand out from others? Have you learned anything from this person? Does this person have any strengths or weaknesses with which you can identify? Brainstorm a list of possible answers to these questions. You may find it helpful to organize your thoughts by clustering. Then use these ideas as raw material for your poem.



After you have finished writing your description or descriptive poem, find a partner. Read your description to your partner. Ask your partner to tell you what he or she finds most interesting about the person in your description. Then do the same for your partner's description.



To be interesting, a character should seem real to you. A character doesn't have to be perfectly good or evil, but should have the same strengths and weaknesses that a real person has. It is also important that an interesting character, like an interesting person, should want something out of life and be prepared to try to get it.

Think, for example, of yourself. What, more than anything else, do you want out of life? Think of the person you just described in your Journal. What do you think this person wants more than anything else? Romance? Adventure? Riches? Acceptance by others? Inner peace?

Finally, think of the person your partner described. What do you think this person wants? Does your partner agree with your answer? Chances are, if you can't think of anything, then you have not found your partner's character to be very interesting.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

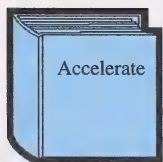
Sometimes, people don't *know* what they want. Often, they become confused and frustrated in their attempts to understand their lives. As a result, they will sometimes do or say things which make no sense, even to themselves. Can you think of such a situation? Perhaps it involved you or someone you know. Looking back at it, can you explain now why the situation happened? Was anything learned or gained from the experience?

In Module 2 you learned that you can often figure out what a piece of writing is about before you start reading by using clues such as the title. Writers choose their titles very carefully. Often the title gives you clues about the content of the writing. In a story, the title may provide some information about the characters and what they are doing.

2. You are about to read the short story “Running with Marty.” Look carefully at the title of this short story. What hints about the story does the title give you?

3. Now that you’ve used the clues in the title to predict who and what the story may be about, what questions do you still have about the story?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 1.



Turn to page 3 in *Accelerate* and read the story “Running with Marty.” Pay careful attention to the characters in this story. In the following activity you will explore these characters in more detail.

Activity 2: Breathing Life into Character



Okay, I understand that character is important, but how does a writer help us get to know a character? Does the writer just introduce the characters and start describing them?

Well, the writer could, but that might get pretty boring after a while. Fortunately, a writer has several ways of presenting a character. Following, you'll find three typical methods of **characterization**.



Characterization: the portrayal of fictional characters in a way that allows the reader to perceive them as living beings

Methods of Characterization

Method A

The writer tells you directly what a character is like. For example: “Joe was a tall, lanky, happy-go-lucky teenager, with a knack for getting into trouble.”

Method B

The character tells you about himself through his words, actions, appearance, and thoughts. For example: “The problem with this world,” laughed Joe, as he lit the stink bomb, “is that everyone’s too serious. People are afraid to have fun.”

Method C

Other characters talk or react to the character, letting you know what they think the character is like. For example: “Look Joe,” said his father, “You’ve got to stop going around with your head in the clouds. Your practical jokes aren’t so funny to a lot of people.”

A writer may use some or all of these methods. For example, in “Running with Marty,” the author, Martha Brooks, never tells you directly what you are supposed to think of Elizabeth. The entire story is told from Elizabeth’s point of view, through her eyes and in her own words. As a result, you are shown many of Elizabeth’s feelings about the people in her life and about her general situation.



JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

***Narrator:** the teller of the story*

The narrator is not necessarily the author, but can be a character in the story.

The **narrator** of this story, Elizabeth, is feeling very stressed. Suppose that she, like many people, keeps a diary. Write a diary entry in which Elizabeth explores her feelings. You might include comments about the following: her relationship with Marty; her relationship with her father and Valdeen; her relationship with her mother.

The author also shows other characters talking and reacting to Elizabeth.

Think about, or in a small group discuss, the following questions. Afterwards, write down an answer for each question.

1. Based on their words and their actions, what do the following characters think of Elizabeth?

a. her father

b. Valdeen

c. Marty

2. Based on the preceding answers, do you think Elizabeth is being unfair in her comments about any of the three characters? If so, give an example.

3. Do you think Elizabeth made the right decision? Why?

4. In Activity 1, it was stated that a character should “want” something. What do you think Elizabeth wants?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 2.

Activity 3: Character and Conflict



Conflict: the struggle between the main character and an opposing force

So far, you have learned that to write a successful story you must have interesting characters – real-life individuals who want something and are striving to get it. You have also learned that there are different methods of characterization or ways to present your character.

But in order to maintain your audience's interest through to the end of your story you need one final ingredient – a problem, or **conflict**. Conflict is the struggle between the main character and an opposing force. Without conflict, the main character would get whatever he or she wanted, right away, without any effort. Of course, the story might end up being much shorter, but would you really want to read something so predictable?

JOURNAL

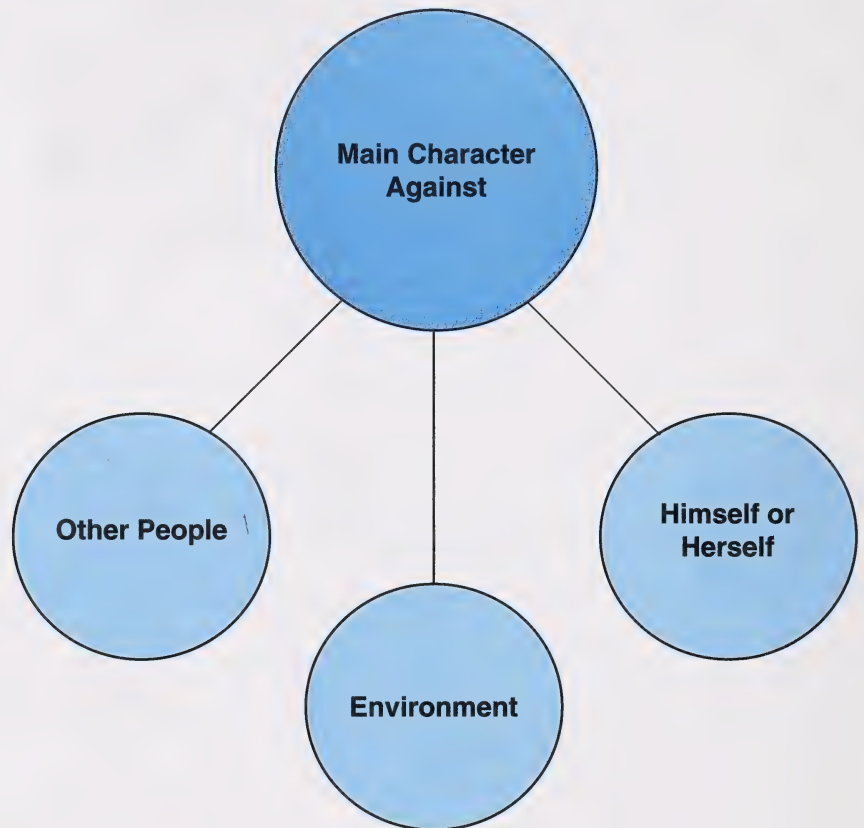
In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Think of something that you or somebody you know has wanted. What problem or conflict prevented you from getting what you wanted right away? How did you deal with this problem? What was the result?

Types of Conflict

In Module 2, Section 2 you were briefly introduced to the three types of conflict that the main character, or protagonist, must deal with. The following chart summarizes the conflicts.

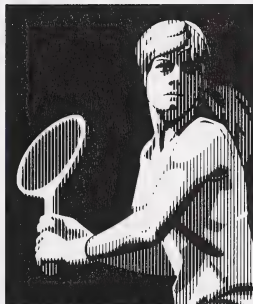
In stories or in films there are three main types of conflict:



Conflict occurs when an obstacle prevents a character from achieving his or her goal; some examples follow.

Person against other people

The main character is a tennis player pitted against another tennis player who everyone feels is unbeatable.

**Person against environment**

The main character is attempting a difficult mountain climb in bad weather.

**Person against himself or herself**

A child feels guilty about stealing some candy and wants to tell his mother, but hesitates.



In “Running with Marty” there are examples of all three types of conflict.

Elizabeth against other people

Elizabeth is in conflict with Marty over her decision to end their relationship. This, in turn, brings her into conflict with Valdeen who thinks she is lucky to have Marty as a boyfriend.

Elizabeth against her environment

(Hint: Here environment can refer to her home situation.)

Elizabeth is bitter and confused about her parents’ divorce and she resents the fact that her father is dating. Her world has been shattered. She hates the instability of her life. She doesn’t like the idea of doing “normal family” activities without both her mother and her father participating. She wishes things were the way they were in the past. She feels out of place.

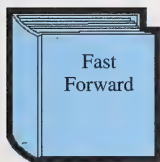
Elizabeth against herself

Elizabeth isn’t sure what she wants. Part of her wants to keep dating Marty because she genuinely likes him, but part of her wants to stop dating him because she is afraid of being hurt by him the way she has been hurt by her parents.

1. Elizabeth would be the first to admit that her life is stressful. In your opinion, which is the most important conflict for Elizabeth to try to resolve if she is to lessen the stress she is feeling? (Feel free to deal with this question at greater length in your Journal.)



The next time you read a story or view a film, try to identify the conflicts as you are reading or viewing. Being able to do this may sometimes help you to better understand the story's meaning. The following viewing exercise will give you a chance to practise your skills.



Turn to page 229 in *Fast Forward*. Look carefully at the picture of the person on horseback. Think about the following questions or discuss them in a small group. Afterwards, write down your answers.

2. Can you find an example of conflict in this picture? Think about what might be happening in the scene. Try to imagine what the rider is thinking and feeling.

3. Does the title of the picture, *The Landmark*, offer you any clues about the outcome of the rider's struggle?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 3.

Activity 4: People and Pictures



So far you have seen how characters and conflict are created with words, but these elements can also be created visually – in films, paintings, cartoons, and photographs. By interpreting details in the particular work, you can better understand the story of the pictures and the characters in it.



Wait a second. When I take a picture of a person, I just press the button. I don't think about telling a story.

Maybe not, but professional photographers do. Just like a storyteller, they have to decide what to include and what to leave out. The people, objects, background, foreground, light and shadow – all have to be arranged to convey what the artist wants you to experience.



Experience? It's just a picture.

Mood: the overall feeling produced in the reader by a piece of literature or a picture



Yes, but the visual artist doesn't want you to see just objects. The visual artist wants to create a **mood**, and make you feel in a particular way.

So, mood is my state of mind or the emotion I feel as I view a picture?



That's correct. It's also worth noting that writers also create mood in their works through their choice of words and details.

So when I tell someone that something I've viewed or read is exciting, or suspenseful, or depressing, or angry, or peaceful, or gloomy, or romantic, or whatever, I am actually talking about **mood**?



Yes.

Wow!





¹ H.T. Kellner for the photograph from *125 photos for English Composition Class* by H.T. Kellner. Reprinted with the permission of H.T. Kellner.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Look at the photograph of the two baseball players. Before taking the picture, the photographer had to decide how to frame it. Framing, or the way the photographer arranges the subject, affects your response to the picture. Once you have looked at the photograph, try changing the frame. First, cover up the batter and the ball, so the pitcher fills the frame. Then, cover up the pitcher so that the batter and the ball fill the frame. How did your response change as the picture changed? Did your feelings about the people in the picture change as well?



I don't know. Taking a good picture still seems like a matter of luck to me.



In case you feel the same way, turn to page 241 in *Fast Forward* and read the info-box entitled “Elements of an Effective Picture.” You will see all the things a visual artist must keep in mind while trying to create an interesting character in an interesting picture.

After you have finished reading, look at the following photograph of the girl in the arcade.



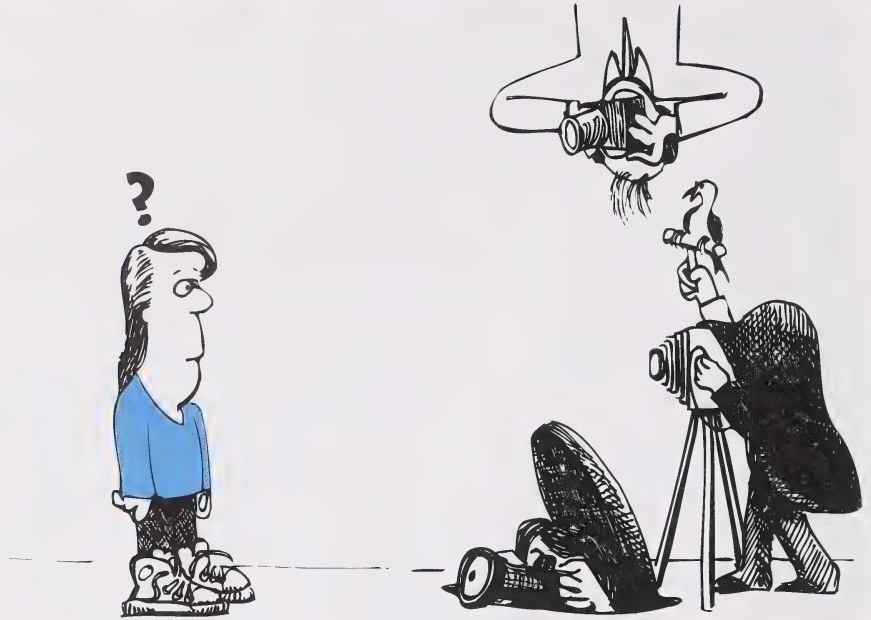
¹ H.T. Kellner for the photograph from *125 Photos for English Composition Class* by H.T. Kellner. Reprinted with the permission of H.T. Kellner.

1. Describe the mood of this photograph. What details do you think help to create this mood?

2. What sort of person is the girl? What makes you think so?

3. Suppose that there were two other people at the machines. Suppose, too, that the photographer had used a flash to increase the amount of light in the picture. How might these changes affect the mood of the picture?

When looking at a picture, your understanding of a character or your feelings about that character can be affected by your *point of view* – that is the position of you, the viewer, in relation to the character. In the photograph of the girl in the arcade, the photographer is standing more or less at the same level as the girl. Suppose the photographer had been up at the ceiling? Or down on the floor? What is the photographer's point of view?



With a partner, try the following experiment. Suppose you are taking photographs of your partner. For the first picture, stand facing each other about two metres apart. For the second picture your partner should sit and you should stand on a chair. For the last picture, you should lie on your back and your partner should stand.

4. From which *camera angle* did your partner appear strongest and most powerful? From which angle did he or she appear weakest and most vulnerable?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 4.



Okay, so what should I learn from this – that my pictures are worth a thousand words?

Sure, why not? People tend to think of pictures and photographs as frozen moments. But they're not. All you have to do is look at a picture closely to see that there is an entire story inside that frozen moment, just waiting to be thawed out and told by you, the viewer.



Unless the photographer's like me and forgets to put film in the camera.

Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

Extra Help

1. In Activity 2, you learned about three different methods of characterization:

Method A: The narrator tells you directly what the character is like.

Method B: The character shows you what he or she is like through his or her words and actions.

Method C: Other characters, through their words and their behaviour toward the character, let you know how the character is viewed by others.

Match the following excerpts from the story about a teenager named David Meyerson with the particular method of characterization being used.

- a. “Are you kidding? Not a chance! I hate cats. I don’t like having them anywhere near me,” said David as he gently caressed the kitten that had sat on his lap.

Method _____

- b. “I know all about you,” the shopkeeper said to David. “You think you can just take whatever you want. You’re going to end up in jail – just like your brother.”

Method _____

- c. The bus stopped and David Meyerson got off. He was a tall boy, about fifteen years old. He never spoke to the other boys who got off at the same stop, just ducked his head against the wind and rushed off. It was as if to stop and talk was just another way of asking for trouble.

Method _____

2.

Character: To keep you, the reader, interested in a story, the writer must make you interested in the characters.

Character A: a normal happy teenager who likes to watch television

Character B: a teenager who risks losing her friends to stand up for what she believes in

Character C: a teenager who is worried that her clothes don't look as nice as her friends'

The most interesting character is Character _____.

3.

Conflict: Without conflict there is no story, or at least no story that is interesting enough to read. An interesting problem makes you curious.

Problem A: On his way to the doctor's office, a man can't remember if his appointment is for one or two o'clock.

Problem B: While walking down the street, a boy finds a wallet stuffed with twenty dollar bills.

Problem C: On his way to a skiing holiday, a man wonders if the lines at the chair lifts will be long.

The most interesting problem is Problem _____.

4.

Types of conflict: A character in a story may encounter a problem with another person (person against other people); with outside forces (person against environment); or with himself or herself (person against himself or herself).

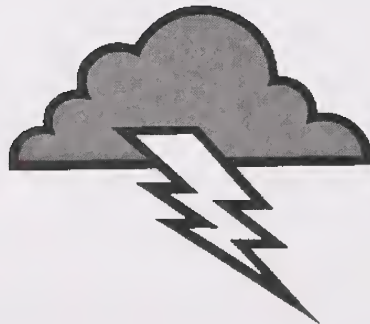
Identify each of the following conflicts:

- a. a boy finds a wallet stuffed with twenty dollar bills and tries to decide what to do with it

- b. a boy faces a bully

- c. a boy is caught on a lake in a huge storm

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Extra Help.



Enrichment

Do one or both of the following questions.

1. In Activity 3, you learned about the three different types of conflict: a person against another person, a person against nature or the environment, or a person against himself or herself. In a creative visual way, try to convey what you think is meant by each type of conflict. (If you don't like to draw, try cutting out pictures and creating a collage that illustrates each type of conflict.)

If you have access to a video camera you might want to create a short visual representation, using actors, of what you think is meant by each type of conflict.



2. Think of a film or a television show that you have enjoyed. Think of the name of the main character. In your opinion, what did the character want (for example, what was that person's goal in the course of the film)? Which type of conflict did the main character experience most? What was the result of the conflict? Was it resolved happily or unhappily?

Use the chart that follows to record your answers to these questions.

Title of Film or TV Show

Name of Character

Character's Goal

Main Type of Conflict

Description of Conflict

Outcome of Conflict

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Enrichment.

Conclusion

In this section, you studied the importance of character. You learned about some of the means a writer has for creating a detailed and interesting characterization. You examined different types of conflict and looked at why conflict is important in maintaining a reader's interest in a story. In the last activity, you studied how character and emotion are conveyed in examples of visual communication.

In your Assignment Booklet complete the assignment for this section.



SECTION

2

THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY



In the last section you looked at imaginary people – the characters in literature and films. You saw how writers create interest in their characters. In this section, you will broaden your focus to include writing about real people and their concerns. You will see that although the writer doesn't have to create the people he or she is writing about, the writer must work just as hard to make their lives and concerns interesting to you, the reader.

In this section you will become familiar with the two major types of prose writing: fiction and non-fiction. Fiction focuses on imaginary people and events, whereas non-fiction focuses on real people and actual events. Fiction and non-fiction may be different in their approaches, but both still have the same goal: to help you understand people and their needs better. The literature that you will read in this section explores the need to find and preserve one's identity and self-worth.

Activity 1: Literature Based on Reality



You mentioned the word prose.
What is it, anyway?



Prose: ordinary written or spoken language



Prose is ordinary written or spoken language, as opposed to poetry, which usually has a definite structure or pattern.

Fiction: literature which tells of imaginary events, places, experiences, or people

Non-fiction: literature which tells of actual events, places, experiences, and people

In literature, there are two types of prose – **fiction** and **non-fiction**. The following chart should help to separate them for you:

Fiction	Non-fiction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literature which tells of imaginary events, places, experiences, or people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – short story – novel – play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literature which tells of actual events, places, experiences, and people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – biography – autobiography – newspaper or magazine article – history book – interview – editorial – essay – how-to book



By the looks of it, a fiction writer can add to his or her story and make it more interesting. Wouldn't that make non-fiction more boring then, since real life isn't as exciting as, say, a movie?

You're right, it could be. But non-fiction writers usually write about interesting things. You, for instance, wouldn't give an account of brushing your teeth or eating breakfast, unless something unusual happened during those times. You'd probably talk or write about something more interesting, something that you think your listener or reader wants to hear.



What if I wanted to talk about my trip to Banff last summer? Suppose I wanted to describe the scenery – wouldn't that be boring...? But then, if I described it well and the person I was talking to was interested... It's funny, I guess we all talk non-fiction, don't we? Except this friend of mine: When he talks about what he did all weekend, it's straight fiction...

Here are some of the ways non-fiction is used:

Biography – a story of a person’s life, written by another person

Autobiography – a story of a person’s life, written by that person

Newspaper or magazine article – a factual account of an event

Essay – an organized composition that develops one or more ideas or impressions. The writer presents an argument in favour of an idea that he or she believes in.

1. Complete the following sentence:

The main difference between fiction and non-fiction is

2. Suppose that you are a writer specializing in writing biographies of famous people. In the following chart, fill in the names of three famous people. To the right of the person’s name, make up a title for your book about that person (make sure the title fits the person). An example is done for you.

Name	Title of Biography
Wayne Gretzky	Hockey’s Greatest Legend
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

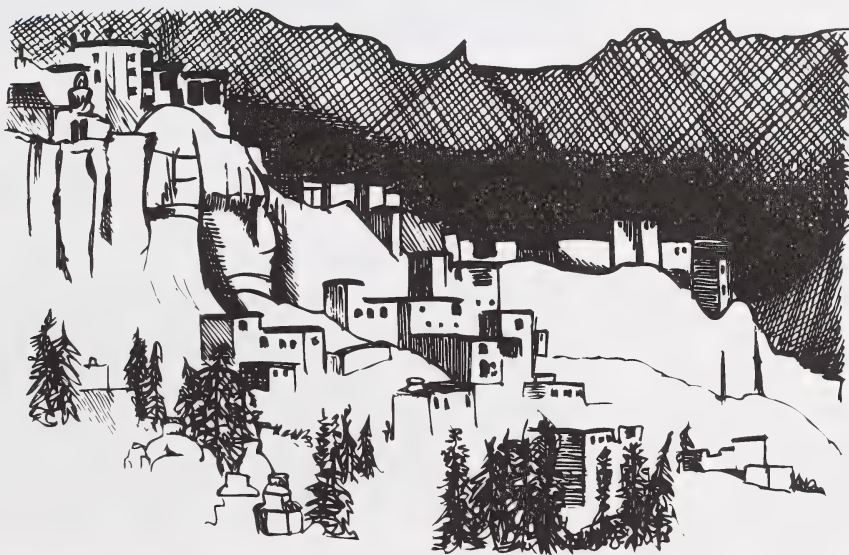
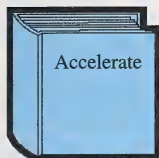
Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 1.

Biography

Biography: a story of a person's life written by another person

In a **biography**, a biographer wants to show you what the person being written about is really like – what he or she thinks and feels. The biographer wants to show you what the person has done, what the person is doing now, and what the person would like to do in the future. Above all, a biographer should make you feel that the subject is worth writing about.

Turn to page 106 in *Accelerate* to the short biography entitled “Notes from Tibet.”



In this biography, the writer, Mark Abley, wants you to know about the life of a Tibetan-born Canadian named Thubten Samdup. Read the biography and then answer the following questions:

3. In a good biography, the biographer should interview the subject in order to let the reader know what the subject thinks and feels. Quote a speech which shows Samdup's feelings about the reaction of Western media to the destruction of Tibetan culture.

4. Wealthy, powerful, or famous people are most often the subject of biographers. Thubten Samdup is not a famous person. He will probably never be wealthy or powerful. Why, then, do you think Mark Abley chose to write about him?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 1.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Imagine that you, like Thubten Samdup, have the responsibility of keeping your culture alive in a country thousands of kilometres from home. You have been placed in charge of the Canadian exhibit at the local fair in your new country. Which aspects of Canadian life would you want other cultures to experience?

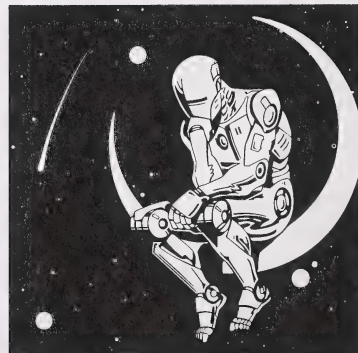
Autobiography

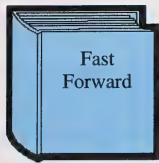
***Autobiography:** a story of a person's life, written by that person*

***Anecdote:** a short story about an interesting event*

Whenever you tell friends about things that have happened to you, you are telling anecdotes that could become part of your **autobiography** – the story of your own life. Whenever you tell friends about things that have happened to you, you are adding another story or **anecdote** to your autobiography.

At the end of this activity, you will write in your Journal an autobiographical anecdote. Before you start rummaging through your life for something to write about, read some examples of anecdotes – stories other people have written about their own lives.





Turn to pages 215 to 219 in *Fast Forward* and read the anecdotes entitled “I Got Lost,” “It’s a Sin,” “The Colour of Your Skin,” and “Three Words – You Got Job?”



All of these anecdotes are told by new Canadians about their struggles to establish a new identity for themselves in Canadian society.

Think about, or in a small group, discuss your reaction to one of the experiences related in the anecdote you have read. Use these statements to help you get started:

This story made me feel _____ because _____

I especially liked the part about _____ because _____

It sounded true to me because _____

It reminded me of _____

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Perhaps you are also a new Canadian. But even if you have lived in Canada all your life, you have probably experienced a time when you have felt unappreciated, or trapped by unfair circumstances. Write an anecdote describing the situation that produced these feelings. Did you do anything to change the situation? What? What was the result of your actions?

The anecdote you wrote will be just part of one chapter in your autobiography. Give your anecdote or chapter an appropriate title.

Activity 2: Fiction Versus Non-Fiction



How does a writer know whether to write fiction or non-fiction?



*It depends on what a writer is hoping to achieve with a piece of writing. In other words, what is the writer's **purpose**?*

Okay, suppose I wanted to write about the dangers of drinking and driving. Should I write about the time my dad's car was hit by a drunk driver? Or should I write a letter to the newspaper stating that our courts should be tougher on drinking drivers? Or should I make up a story about a character who drinks too much and gets into an accident where the people in the other car are all killed?



Why don't you try writing all three? You probably won't know which way will work best for you until you start writing.

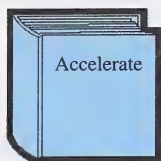
But which is best?



Maybe you should let the reader decide that. That's what a professional writer does. It's not uncommon for a writer to write on the same topic more than once, creating works of fiction and non-fiction.

The author Neil Bissoondath is a talented writer of both fiction and non-fiction. Of Indian descent, he was born in Trinidad in 1955 and moved to Canada as a teenager. Like most good writers, he *writes what he knows* – that is, his writing is inspired by his personal experiences and concerns. For example, from his own experiences as a new Canadian he has written extensively about the experiences of immigrants in Canada. His stories and articles raise interesting questions about the problems facing new Canadians.

Now you will read and compare two pieces of prose by Neil Bissoondath – a magazine article and a short story.



Turn to page 95 in *Accelerate* and read the magazine article “I’m Not Racist but....”

1. Often in non-fiction writing, the writers present an argument. They tell the reader directly what they think and present examples to back up their statements.
 - a. In the first paragraph, what is the opinion about racism that Bissoondath holds?

 - b. What evidence, examples, or statements does he provide to back up this opinion?

2. Bissoondath distinguishes between two types of racism. The first or less dangerous type is based on “ignorance” (paragraph 4). What does he mean?

3. According to Bissoondath, what is “true racism” (paragraph 7)?

4. Why is Bissoondath against such competitions as the Miss Black Canada Beauty Contest (paragraph 9)?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 2.

In the article “I’m Not Racist but...” Bissoondath’s purpose is to state and explain his opinions on the problem of racism. In the short story “Arrival,” which you are about to read, Bissoondath does not tell us directly what he thinks. He is concerned instead about creating an interesting story, and making us care about his characters. He wants to show us what immigrants often experience. (In fact, the entire story is seen through the eyes of one of his characters). As well, you must remember that the opinions of his characters are not necessarily Bissoondath’s opinions. His role as a story teller is to present a scene as fully and realistically as he can and let you, the reader, draw your own conclusions.

The next reading, the short story “Arrival,” is about the fears and doubts a woman feels upon arriving in a new country.

Turn to page 244 in *Fast Forward* and read the short story “Arrival.”



JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Describe what Sheila was feeling when she arrived in Canada. Write about a time in which you were in a new situation and were receiving advice that you didn't really want.

Think about, or in a small group discuss, the following questions. Afterwards, write down your answers.

5. The narrator, Sheila, has just moved to Canada from her home in Trinidad. Why does she immediately find her new country “frightening”?



6. Sheila's thoughts are often different from her words. What is she not telling Annie about what she thinks and how she feels?

7. Conflict arises when Annie starts giving advice to Sheila about life in Canada. Summarize Annie's advice to Sheila about life in Canada.

8. What does Sheila think of Annie’s advice?

9. Now that you have read both “I’m not racist but...” and “Arrival” list the differences between the article and the short story.

Article	Short Story

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 2.

Activity 3: Finding Meaning in Literature

*So what was Neil
Bissoondath trying to
say about people?*



*Well, I have my opinion. Yours,
however, may be different.*



So what's the right answer?



When you're talking about the meaning of a piece of literature, there is no one absolute right answer. You see, meaning depends on a number of different factors.

In trying to sort out the meaning of a passage, you have to take into account four different things:

- the author
- the text
- the reader
- the society of which the author and reader are a part



For an explanation of these components, turn to pages 288 and 289 in *Fast Forward*. Read the section “Where Does Meaning Lie?”

In trying to find the meaning in Bissoondath’s two works, you should consider each of the four components. For example:

The Author: Neil Bissoondath has been quoted in interviews as saying that people should emphasize their similarities rather than their differences. He believes that the government’s multiculturalism policy can slow down a new Canadian’s integration into Canadian society.

The Text: His views are reflected in both pieces of writing. But some people may not know that Bissoondath is from Trinidad. They may not know anything about his views on multiculturalism. For them, the focus of the story might be on the mixture of fear and wonder that people feel whenever they confront the unknown (as Sheila does).

The Reader: Suppose you had never heard anyone with a West Indian accent. You might be very puzzled at the way Sheila and Annie speak – you might think them very strange. On the other hand, suppose you, too, were from Trinidad. You might marvel at the author’s accurate ear for Trinidadian speech. “Yes, I know these people,” you might say. Still another reader might say, “I understand what Sheila’s going through. I had to move to a new place, once.”

The Society: Neil Bissoondath has been called an ethnic writer. It is a term he hates, for his work has proved popular with all groups. In experiencing his characters you have to confront your own attitudes. Some readers, for example, might agree with Annie’s negative comments, because they have experienced similar prejudice. Others, however, might feel sorry for her for feeling that she must erect her own barriers against Canadian society.

Look again at your answer to question 9 in Activity 2. Would you add or change anything based on your knowledge of the four components? Feel free to go back and improve your answer.



When you are done, return to your textbook *Fast Forward* and read pages 290 and 291. Here, you will read a poem, “David’s Rabbit,” and then see another example of how the four components can be applied to help you find meaning in the poem. Read carefully, because next you will apply the four components to a poem that you read in Module 2 about a group of teenagers and a storekeeper entitled “Mr. Ford and the Petty Thieves.”



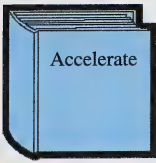
“They’re all alike.” In Canadian society, people value individuality, yet some people are only too willing to lump people together. Just think, for example, of the negative comments often directed at teenagers. Such comments only create distrust and bad feeling between people. On the other hand, when one person treats another with respect and dignity, there can be rewards on both sides.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

What do you think the attitude to shoplifting is in our society? Do you agree with this attitude? What are some of the reasons why people shoplift?





Read the poem “Mr. Ford and the Petty Thieves” on pages 13 to 15 in *Accelerate*. Then think about, or in a small group discuss, how the four components apply to the poem. The first one, “Author,” is done for you.

The Author: *Suppose the author had said this about his poem: “I wrote this poem because I wanted to show that teenagers aren’t all bad, that a teenager who makes mistakes can learn to stop making them.”*

The Text: Have each member of the group read a section of the poem. Does the group agree with the author’s comments? Is there more to be found in the poem than the author intended?

The Society: Since the poem deals with shoplifting have each member share his or her thoughts on the journal topic. Is Mr. Ford’s behaviour typical of society’s attitude? If not, what would be typical?

The Reader: What is your response to the young man? Do you agree with Mr. Ford’s “testing” of the young man? Is the test fair?

This discussion should help to generate some ideas about the meaning of the poem. You may wish to record your ideas in your Journal. After you have discussed the various components, try to answer the following question about meaning.

What “life lesson” or lessons do you think the young man learned from his experiences with Mr. Ford?

Compare your response with that in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 3.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Choose a topic about which you feel strongly. (For example, Neil Bissoondath felt strongly about the topic of racism.) Write either a short article or a one to two page story dealing with your topic.

After you have finished writing your article, fill in the Author segment of the four categories of meaning. Under “Author,” explain what inspired you to write what you did.



In a small group or with a partner, read your last Journal entry and comments aloud. Have the other members (or “readers”) give their comments about your work. For example, did you accomplish what you set out to do in your writing? Perhaps the group found more in your work than you intended. After you are finished, help the other members with their presentations.



If you are by yourself, you should read your Journal entry into a tape recorder. Later, you may want to submit both the recording and the written copy as part of your final module assignment in the Assignment Booklet.

Activity 4: Writing a Personal Letter



To establish yourself as an individual, you have to be prepared to stand up for what you believe in and tell people what you think. That is what Neil Bissoondath did in writing his magazine article; and that is what Thubten Samdup did in bringing the music of Tibetan culture to Western audiences.

What about the average person? Do people have to be talented artists to be able to express their identity? Not at all. You already speak your mind every day of the week in conversations with others. But sometimes the person is too far away to hear you. Sometimes, what you want to say makes more sense if you write it down. In such cases, you can resort to the most commonly-used form of non-fiction prose there is – letter writing.

The Personal Letter

You probably write letters already, and even if you don't, you likely will sometime. Therefore, it is important you are aware that a letter you write says a great deal about you, and that you understand the basic format of a personal letter.

There are many types of letters, but you will be most likely to write a personal letter. In a personal letter, you have the opportunity to express your personality in an informal way to your readers (usually friends or relatives).

Many personal letters are written for a specific **purpose**, such as to thank someone or to ask someone to do something. Often, however, your purpose is simply to keep in touch – to share your thoughts and feelings with someone you like and trust.

Your letter should express your individuality, but it should also be neat enough to read easily. After all, a neat letter makes the reader feel he or she is worth the time and effort you are taking.

Here is a sample of the personal letter format. Notice the margins at the top, bottom and sides. Also, notice the names of the key parts of the letter.

421 Meredith Place
Leduc, Alberta
January 20, 1995

Dear Sandra,

The photographs arrived safely and I am going to be working on the first project soon. I am looking forward to compiling the family history, and your help is certainly appreciated.

If you come out west this summer, it'll be fun to get together. We could perhaps visit some of the interesting spots in the area.

Thanks very much for that informative and interesting material you sent me last month.

Speaking of interesting things, I've been renting some old classic movies recently and I think I'm turning into a Humphrey Bogart fan too.

With love,

Mary

Labels on the right side of the letter:

- Heading
- Greeting or Salutation
- Body
- Closing
- Signature

Some Basic Rules

Heading

- Do not abbreviate words like Street and Avenue.
- Notice, in the sample letter, where the commas and periods are placed and where they are not placed.

Salutation

- Begin the salutation (greeting) at the left-hand margin.

Body

- Use paragraphs. When you switch to another idea, begin a new paragraph.
- In a personal letter, it is acceptable to use contractions (“I’m,” “it’ll”).
- Write about things that will be of interest to your reader.

Closing

- Only the first word of the closing is capitalized.
- Don’t close a personal letter with *Yours truly*, *Sincerely*, *Yours sincerely*, or *Sincerely yours*. Leave those for business letters. The following are good examples of a closing for a personal letter: *Yours*, *With love*, *Your friend*, or *Love from*.

Signature

- The signature may be a whole name, a first name, or a nickname.
- There is no period after the signature.

For something that’s supposed to be personal, there sure are a lot of rules.





Not really. After you do it once or twice, the format is easy to remember. Besides, if you take care writing your letter, you're probably more likely to get a letter back. As a famous writer once said: "The only good reason to write a letter is to get one sent to you."

The Importance of Tone

Tone: the author or speaker's attitude toward a subject or audience, reflected in the choice of words and emphasis

In writing a personal letter, you want to find the appropriate **tone** for your writing. For example, your tone may vary depending on the person who will be reading your letter. Will it be your best friend or your great-grandmother? As a rule, you should be informal but not slangy, casual but not sloppy. For example, the following thank-you letter could safely be described as too informal:

	Hey Auntie,
	Thanks a bunch for the birthday present,
	eh! I mean, "Super Wally" is the video
	game this year. It's so hot, it's addictive!
	Kike, it must of cost ya a bundle, huh?
	It was worth it, believe me - I haven't
	left my room since I opened it, I've been
	so busy zapping little Wallys. And all
	of my friends are begging to play - I
	can't get rid of 'em. I'm gonna bust
	the world record on bust Wallys, you wait.
	You're the best. I'll write you again after
	Christmas.
	Your favorite nephew,
	Al

On the other hand, you don't want your tone to be too formal:

222-50 Street
Anytown, Alberta
April 1, 1992

Dear Aunt Susan,

This is to inform you of the arrival of the video game which you so graciously sent me. The game was received by yours truly with considerable satisfaction. In fact, recent playing of the game has resulted in hours of amusement on my part. I would therefore like to express my sincerest gratitude.

With fondest regards,



Alexander

Try to strike a balance between these two extremes. Be conversational but respectful toward your reader.

The following is one example of a personal letter with correct format and appropriate tone:

222-50 Street
Anytown, Alberta
April 1, 1992

Dear Aunt Sue,

Thank you very much for the video game you sent me. The parcel was waiting for me yesterday when I got home. I'd just finished a pretty dismal day at school – after all, who really wants to go to school on his birthday! – but your present managed to change my mood in a hurry.

I set up the game last night and it works very well. I even got a chance to play after I managed to tear the joystick away from Dad. He wasn't too happy – he said he was only ten points away from being crowned King of the Parallel Universe, wherever that is.

Mum says you are going to be coming west to visit us this summer. I think that's great news. As you know, I have a part-time job now, and I hope to have enough saved by summer to buy a car. If so, you'll have to let me chauffeur you around town to see the sights. Alberta is great in summer: sunny, not too hot, long days, and mosquitoes the size of canned hams. You'll love it!

Well, I have to go – Dad's shouting that he's stuck in another dimension. Again, thanks for the present. I hope I can think of something as nice for your birthday. I look forward to seeing you.

With love,

Al

Before you write a letter, you may find it helpful to do some brainstorming, clustering, or freewriting to generate and organize your ideas.

Now it's your turn to write a one-page personal letter. Complete either question 1, or 2, or 3.

1. In the short story "Arrival," Sheila is experiencing doubt and fear. She is sad about leaving behind her old, familiar life and she is not sure she will fit into Canadian society. Write a personal letter to Sheila. What could you tell her that would reassure her and give her hope?
2. In "Running with Marty" it seems that some of the characters do not always communicate openly or honestly with each other. Sometimes it's easier to write what you really feel about a person or situation than it is to talk about it. Imagine that you are one of the characters in this short story. Write a personal letter expressing your feelings about the situation you are in or about the relationship you have with one of the other characters. The letter may be addressed to a character in the story or to someone else.
3. Write a personal letter to someone you actually know. Tell this person about any hobbies or interests you have, your plans, recent events, or any other newsworthy items that you think the reader of your letter would be interested in hearing about.

Use this space for brainstorming a list of ideas, freewriting, or clustering.

For your letter



Refer to the comments in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 4.

Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

Extra Help

Do one or both of the following questions.

1. Read the following example of an imaginary student assignment.

English 13 Biography Assignment: Calvin Smith – A Fascinating Person

I am writing about a person named Calvin Smith. He sits across the room from me in Social class. He's about average height, and likes to wear jeans, and he smokes. He seems to hang around by himself a lot, listening to his music through headphones. He's a good artist, too; he's always drawing – on his books, lunchbag, desk – you name it. He's got these friends who are always hanging around the caf. They say he used to have his own rock band before he moved here. But then, his friends aren't exactly the most trustworthy types. I think he's from Ontario, or maybe Quebec, I'm not sure. He wasn't in class yesterday and when I called him up for an interview, the phone was busy. And I couldn't go over to his house because I had to meet my girlfriend. We've been seeing each other for about three months now. In conclusion, she says Calvin is a really nice guy once you get to know him.



Based on what you learned in Activity 1, what suggestions would you give this student that would improve this biography?

Compare your response with that in the Appendix, Section 2: Extra Help



Two English 13 students, Jonathan and Whitney, are discussing the meaning of a story. It could be any story.



I think the story is about the mess that parents can make out of their children's lives.

I think the story is about hope. Sure, she has problems, but she feels she can handle them. Her life is about to improve.



How? She's stuck in a place she doesn't want to be. Everything in her life is going wrong. Nobody seems to care about her.

But she still has her sense of humour. She can make jokes about her situation. I know what she's going through – I've felt like her myself. The rest of the world may be crazy, but, inside, she knows she's still okay.



What jokes? I didn't laugh. Neither did the rest of the group. Face it, Whitney, the story is a downer. You can't say it has a positive meaning. It's not possible.

Of course it's possible.



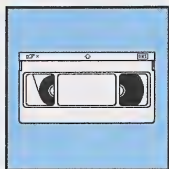
2. Is it possible? Based on the notes about meaning in Activity 3, who is right? Jonathan or Whitney? Why?

Compare your response with that in the Appendix, Section 2: Extra Help.

Enrichment

Do one or all of the following questions.

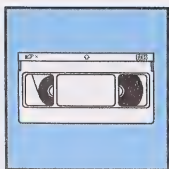
1. Many of the readings in this section have dealt with new Canadians trying to find their way in a new and often puzzling country. For the benefit of these new Canadians (perhaps you are one yourself), try to express what you think Canada is and perhaps what makes Canadians different from people in other countries. Use any form you like: poetry, prose, pictures, drawings. Your definition may be personal or all-encompassing. It could apply just to you or to everyone.
2. Assume that you have moved to a country with a different culture (it could even be Canada). With a partner, or by yourself, brainstorm a list of possible difficulties you might have in applying for a job. Then write a dialogue between yourself and a potential employer showing these problems. When you have finished writing your dialogue, read it aloud, with your partner or by yourself. You may wish to tape record or videotape your dialogue, or perhaps act it out before a small group.
3. If you have access to the National Film Board video, *Teach Me To Dance*, you may like to do this question. It is a story about the friendship of two young girls growing up in rural, turn-of-the-century Alberta. One of the girls is of Ukrainian heritage; the other girl's family has its roots in the dominant English culture. The girls remain friends in spite of powerful forces that try to drive them apart. As you view the video, look for examples of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, or examples of members of the dominant culture trying to limit the cultural expression of a minority group.



JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Imagine that you are one of the two girls in the video, *Teach Me To Dance*. In a letter to the other girl (or someone else) write how you feel about the situation you and your friend are in.



4. If you have access to the National Film Board video, *Meeting Place*, you may want to view it to gain further insight about the experiences of newcomers to Canada as told by several immigrants and refugees. As you watch the video, try to imagine what it would be like if you were a newcomer to Canada.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Imagine that you are an immigrant or refugee who has only very recently arrived in Canada. You come from a country that is very different from Canada – different culture, different language, different climate, different standard of living, etc. What would be your perception of this new country? You may want to write your Journal response in the form of a letter to a friend or relative in “the old country,” or a poem, or any other format.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Enrichment.

Conclusion

In this section, you have looked at the two major types of prose writing – fiction and non-fiction. You have become familiar with a variety of non-fiction forms: biography, autobiography, the magazine article, and the personal letter. You have studied how an author (Neil Bissoondath) can convey similar ideas while working with two different types of writing (fiction and non-fiction).

You have read works of both fiction and non-fiction, all of them emphasizing people’s need to find and preserve their identity. In trying to understand these works, you have realized that there is no one absolute meaning for a piece of literature. Meaning depends on a number of factors, all of which may produce differing responses among readers. In the last activity, you practised the correct format and the appropriate tone for expressing yourself in the most commonly used type of non-fiction writing – the personal letter.

ASSIGNMENT

In your Assignment Booklet complete the assignment for this section.



SECTION

3

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



Many writers have called life a journey. In order to understand who you are, you must understand where you have been, where you are now, and where you are going in your life. In learning to understand yourself, you are better able to understand and accept the differences in others.

You will find that many of the readings in this section bring together different generations – mother and daughter, father and son. Past lives are reopened and looked at with new eyes, so that present lives can be better understood. For life is the one journey where no destination is left behind; each step you take stays with you, planted firmly in your memory.

In the last section, you examined two types of prose. In this section, you will look briefly at poetry and its purposes. You will also read a play and examine the differences between it and other kinds of fiction. Finally you will be introduced to the three levels of comprehension that are designed to help you to understand more fully any literature you read.

Activity 1: Poetry and You

In Section 2, you were told that there were two kinds of writing: prose and poetry. So far you have dealt with several kinds of prose. Now we will look at poetry...

Oh no, I've always had a hard time with poetry.



What do you find difficult about poetry?

1. Based on your experiences with writing and studying poetry, give at least one possible reason why you think a student might not want to read or write poetry.

Compare your response with that in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.



You're not alone. A lot of people have trouble with poetry. One of the most confusing things about poetry is that it keeps changing. It used to be easy to define a poem. It rhymed, or it had a certain number of beats in a line, or it sounded different from ordinary speech: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways..." But in the twentieth century, poetry changed. Most poems stopped rhyming, and they began to sound more like ordinary speech. Even so, many students still have difficulty understanding poetry.

So, what is poetry supposed to be?



Basically, poetry is freedom – freedom to say what you like in as many or as few words as you like. And you can arrange the words any way you want. For example, with prose you have to start at the left margin and move to the right. With a poem, you can start at the

right margin

and go up or down or even
e i
l n
cric a



Isn't that a square?





So what – it's my poem. But poetry is more than simply arranging words on paper. It's about feeling – it's about the freedom to express what is difficult to express.

Give me an example.



If you tried to tell me you were thirsty, it wouldn't mean much to me. But if you tell me your mouth is like sawdust, or that your tongue feels like coarse sandpaper, it would help me to understand what you are feeling. This is what poets try to do: they express what is difficult to put into words. Imagine trying to explain what an apple tastes like to someone who has never seen an apple. Or trying to tell a child how to tie a shoelace without using your hands?

I'd tell him to use velcro.



Okay, but try explaining the feeling of a sunrise, the thrill of an exciting film, the excitement of a new love, or the pain of a love that has passed. Poets try to do this.

Yes, but I don't like all that feeling stuff – it's embarrassing. I like facts. For example, remember that trip I took to Banff? Wouldn't it be easier just to write down what I did there, and add a lot of details?



Sure. But isn't the biggest detail the fact you had a great time? You **felt** great. Why not put those great feelings into a poem?

How? I wouldn't know where to start.



I'll help you. Here's an easy exercise. Think of the hottest day you've ever experienced. Now think of words to describe that experience. Any words at all.



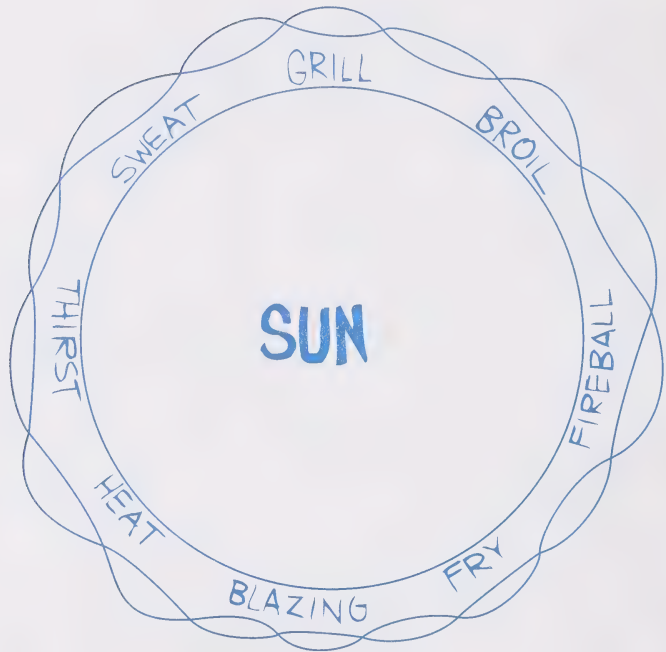
Okay. Thirst. Sweat. Heat. Blazing. Broil. Grill. Fry. Fireball. Now how do I make that into a poem?





Like this. You could call it "Heat."

HEAT



*Concrete poetry: poetry
resembling its subject matter*

This is called a **concrete poem**. Concrete means something real or substantial. A concrete poem is written so that it actually looks like whatever it is describing.

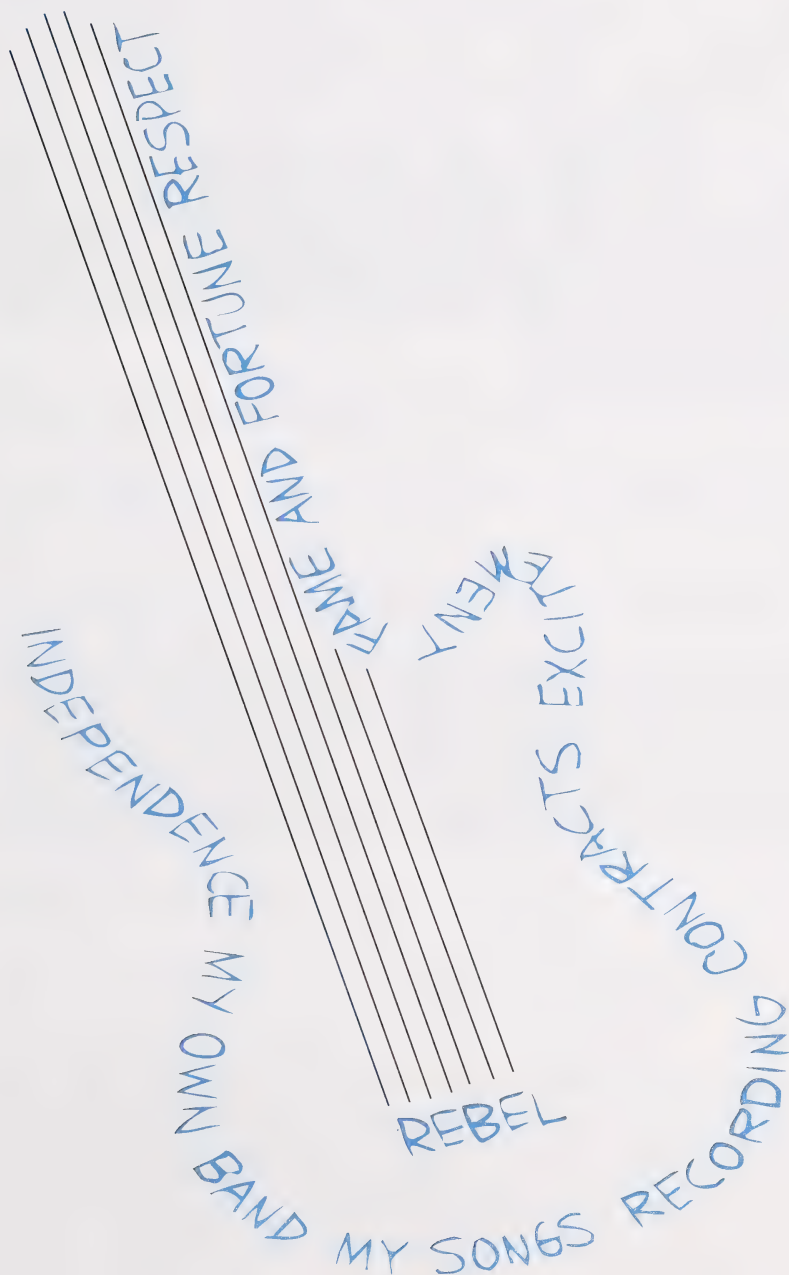
For example, suppose you enjoy playing the guitar. You want to play in a rock band. Under guitar, you might brainstorm the following:

excitement
callouses
write songs
respect

rebel
independence
fame and fortune

solo riffs
my own band
recording contracts

You could then try to mould your description into a word-picture in the shape of a guitar. For example:



Now it's your turn.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Think of an object that you value, that helps to sum up who you are. You might want to look back at your "I am" poem for an idea. Once you think of an object, write down ten words to describe what that object means to you.

What is poetry then? A poem is an arrangement of words on paper that expresses a feeling. It can be written any way a poet chooses, as long as it expresses a feeling.

*I still don't think I can
write a poem.*



It's been said that life turns people into poets. Anyone who can feel, who can appreciate their own emotions and the emotions of others, can write poetry. You may think you are not a very good poet, but does that really matter? A lot of people who can't hold a tune love to sing, and many people love to bowl even though they know they will never win a trophy.

Haiku Poetry

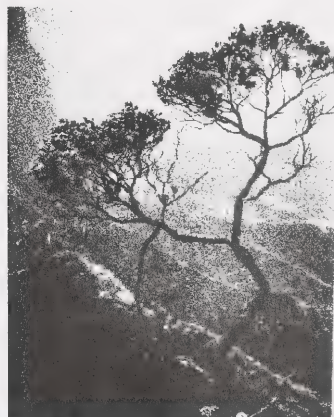
One of the best ways to develop your poetic ability is to practise writing **haiku** poems. Haiku is an ancient Japanese form of poetry. Many beginning poets like haiku because they are very short and simple. They are only three lines long and there are no rhymes. Only a single feeling (also called a sensory image) is described. There are, however, strict rules for writing a haiku, and you should learn them before attempting to write one.



To learn more about haiku and the rules for writing these poems, you may want to view the 14-minute video, *Haiku*, produced by Stanton Films and distributed by Omega Films Ltd.



If you do not have access to the video, or if you would like to reinforce the knowledge of haiku you gained watching the video, turn to page 82 in *Fast Forward* and read the two examples of a haiku poem. Then turn to the info-box on page 83 and read “Characteristics of Haiku.”



JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Many haiku are written about the poet's feelings about nature or about other people. Try to write two different haiku about friendship, or relationships in general (the poems on page 82 are good examples). Give each of your poems a title. You may also want to illustrate them.

Understanding a Poem

Whenever you read a poem, you should begin by asking yourself: What caused the poet to write this poem? What feeling or feelings was the poet trying to communicate?



Turn to page 10 in *Accelerate* to the poem “He Raids the Refrigerator and Reflects on Parenthood.”



In this poem, the poet, who calls himself “you” in the poem, expresses not only his own feelings but those of his son. It is a poem about a rite of passage. A rite of passage is a ceremony that marks a stage of development in a person’s life. It is the first time you accomplish something important. Learning to ride a bike, or to drive a car, earning your first pay cheque, graduating, moving into a place of your own, and getting married are all rites of passage. In this poem, both the poet and his son seem to regard the son’s first bottle of beer as a rite of passage.

Read the poem and answer the following questions:

2. What feelings does the poet communicate to you? Explain your answer.

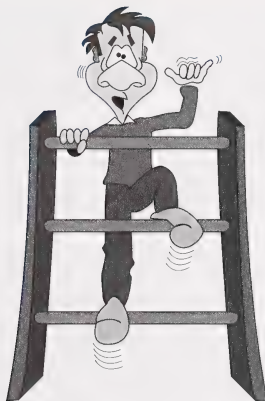
3. What was the imperfection that the poet had in mind when he wrote: “The rite was spoiled/by an imperfection”?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Write the words “rite of passage” in the centre of your page. Circle them and then cluster related ideas around them in order to explore your knowledge and experiences related to “rites of passage” or “firsts.” Can you think of a rite of passage that you or someone else had been anticipating that did not live up to expectations? Explain why this particular “rite of passage” did not turn out as expected. What was learned from the experience?

Activity 2: Levels of Comprehension

Often, after reading a work of literature, students will say, “I don’t get it.” However, most students do “get” what they read – up to a point. They can tell *what* is going on and *who* is involved, but, at the same time, they may not understand the *why* behind a story. Why is the author telling me this? Why is a poem about a warm bottle of beer supposed to be important? And when they can’t find an answer, they will complain: “What has this story got to do with me? I don’t drink beer. Or: “I’m not from Trinidad.” Or: “My parent’s haven’t split up. Why should I care?”

Chances are, these students have difficulty connecting what they read to their own lives, to their own interests, and their view of the world.



But I live in Alberta. What's a story about a woman from Trinidad got to do with my life?

It's not where she's from – it's what she's thinking and feeling. It's about being in a place that's new and strange and being totally overwhelmed by everything.



You mean like when I was a kid and had to go into the hospital to have my tonsils out...?

That's it. You're making a connection. You're trying to understand the story on more than one level.



How many levels are there?



To find out, turn to page 336 in *Fast Forward* and you will see the chart at the top of the page entitled “Levels of Comprehension.” Begin by studying the chart.

Most students are very good at the first, or literal level. This is also known as reading on the lines. Read the paragraph on page 336 entitled “Reading on the Lines” for a description of this level of comprehension.

In order to demonstrate your ability to read on the lines, read the poem on page 337 in *Fast Forward* entitled “Woodtick.”

Flashback: returning to a previous point in time

A helpful hint: The first three lines and the last three lines of the poem are set in the present. The rest of the poem is a **flashback** to a childhood event in the poet’s past.

After you have read the poem, answer the following questions.

1. What happened on the spring day when the poet and her daughter were out walking? This incident caused the poet to remember a childhood experience. Describe the poet’s experience as an eight-year-old.

Turn back to page 336. Did you apply the skills listed beside the literal level of meaning?

2. In a group or by yourself, think of a question that can be answered by a fact or detail from the poem:

Have each member of the group ask his or her question. Attempt to answer each question from the facts and details in the poem.



On page 338, read the three paragraphs under the heading, “Reading Between the Lines.” In the third paragraph, you will be told to read the chart on page 339 as well.

After you have finished reading the chart, answer the following questions about the poem.

3. Where did each incident take place?

4. What is each of the eight-year-old girls afraid of? Why are they afraid?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 2.

Again, in your group or by yourself, make up questions, this time at the interpretive level, and try to answer them.

On page 340 in *Fast Forward*, read “Reading Beyond the Lines.”



JOURNAL

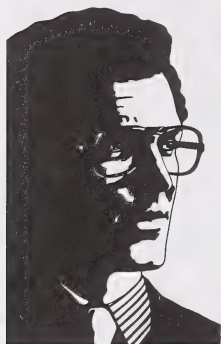
In your Journal respond to the following idea.

The following topic asks you to form an opinion based on your understanding of the facts and relationships in the poem. You may want to discuss your opinions about the poem with others before you begin your response.

In “Woodtick,” the poet describes two incidents of racial prejudice – one she experienced as an eight-year-old and the other she experienced with her eight-year-old daughter. Do you think the poet was affected by the way she was treated? What do you think she is afraid of for her daughter? Try to support your opinions with facts or details from the poem.



Give yourself another chance to develop your levels of comprehension. On page 341 you will find the poem “The Man Who Finds His Son Has Become a Thief.” Before you read this poem, think back to the poem in Section 2 about “Mr. Ford and the Petty Thieves” – another poem about shoplifting. Suppose Mr. Ford had been a different, less understanding storekeeper. Suppose he had called the poet’s father and told him to come down to the store because his son was a thief. The poet’s father might have felt like the man in the poem on page 341.



Read the poem “The Man Who Finds His Son Has Become a Thief.” Afterwards, discuss in a group or if you are by yourself, think about the following questions. For each question, you will be told which level of comprehension is being addressed. After the discussion, write down your answers.

5. What was the mood of the father when he entered the store? (literal level)

6. What picture is created in your mind by the following lines?

“Then seeing gradually that evidence
almost as if slowly tightening around the neck
of his son...” (interpretive level)

7. What is “circumstantial evidence”? (literal level) Suggest a piece of circumstantial evidence the store owner might give the father. (interpretive level)

8. Why do you think the father wanted to get out of the store? (critical level)

9. What is the meaning of the following lines?

“It must be this./It could hardly be otherwise.” (literal and interpretive levels)

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 2.



Activity 3: Reading a Play

In many of the readings in this module, you have seen parents in conflict with their children. In each story or poem, there was a specific conflict in a specific time and place. The play you are about to read, however, is different. In it, you will follow the lives of a parent and child through the many phases of their life-long relationship. Instead of one conflict, you will see family life as a series of conflicts, but with each conflict comes a resolution.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

What phase of a parent-child relationship do you think would be the hardest for both parent and child? Childhood? Adolescence? When the child reaches adulthood, gets married, has children of her or his own? Or when the parent becomes old and the child becomes the caretaker? What would make this phase hard? Which would be the happiest phase for both parent and child? What would make it happy?

STUDENT: Why do we have to read a play? Why can't we see a movie instead? Movies are more interesting to watch.

TEACHER: A play's not that much different from a movie.

STUDENT: Are you kidding? A movie has action, adventure. It can go anywhere in the world. A play's all talk.

TEACHER: A play has action – maybe not as much as some movies, but things still happen. And what's wrong with talk? Don't you like to hear a good conversation?

STUDENT: Well, all right, I'll read the play. Just so long as you don't make me act in it.

Turn to page 29 in *Accelerate* to the play "Tell Me Another Story, Sing Me A Song."

STUDENT: OK. I'm ready to start reading, but before I start, can you give me a few pointers that will help me read the play?

TEACHER: Sure. Look at the beginning paragraphs on page 29. These are the **stage directions**. A play usually begins with stage directions. They are printed in italic type (*italics look like this*). Stage directions give you details of the setting. They help you to "see" the play as you read it. For example, they tell you what the scene looks like. They tell you who the characters are, what they are wearing, and what they are doing onstage. When the characters speak, stage directions tell you how the lines are being spoken: (*sharply*), or (*speaking louder and faster*). By the way, you'll notice that before each speech, the **playwright** will write the character's name, so you know who the speaker is.

STUDENT: Oh, you mean like right now?

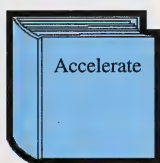
TEACHER: What do you mean – right now?

STUDENT: Haven't you noticed? Whenever I start speaking, it says "Student." And whenever you speak, it says "Teacher." Go ahead. Say something.

TEACHER: I – (*Surprised*) Well, what do you know! So it does.

STUDENT: (*Shaking his head.*) You think they could at least give us proper names. (*Confused*) Does this mean that we're in a play about two characters reading a play? (*Excited*) Maybe it means we're in "The Twilight Zone." (*He begins to hum the theme song.*)

TEACHER: I think it means we'd better read the play.



Stage directions: details in italics that help the reader and actors of a play to understand the characters and the action

Playwright: the author of the play



The play “Tell Me Another Story, Sing Me A Song” focuses on the conflicts between a mother and daughter over a span of approximately forty years. The play is divided into seven different scenes. Each scene shows the characters at a different stage and age in their lives.



Read the play – aloud with a partner, if possible. Try to convey the characters with your voice. If you are not able to work with a partner, you might try recording yourself reading scenes from the play and then listening to the recording. Think about or discuss in a small group the following questions. Write your answers in the space provided.

1. Describe the conflict in each scene. How is each conflict resolved (worked out)?

a. when the daughter is five years old:

b. when she is eight:

c. when she is twelve:

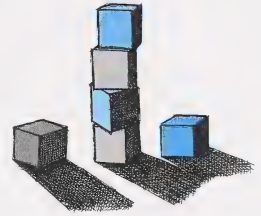
d. when she is sixteen:

e. when she is twenty-one:

f. when she is thirty:

g. when the mother has become old:

2. According to the stage directions, there are six brightly-coloured cubes on stage. Why do you think the playwright included them? Try to think of three reasons.



3. When is the conflict at its most angry between mother and daughter? Hint: When does communication almost break down completely between them?

4. How are the boxes used to emphasize this lack of communication? (Hint: Look carefully at the stage directions for arranging the cubes.)

5. Why might the title “Whatever Goes Around, Comes Around” be appropriate for this play? Explain.

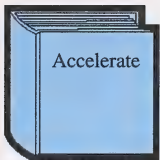
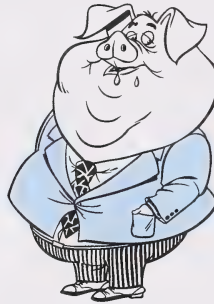
Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 3.

Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

Extra Help

Do one or both of the following questions.



1. Turn to page 28 in *Accelerate* and read the poem “Truce.” Afterwards, answer the following questions, which are based on the material studied in Activity 2.

- a. **Literal:** With what does the poet compare her enemy?

- b. **Interpretive:** Why would such comparison suddenly make the poet lose her anger towards her enemy?

- c. **Critical or Evaluative:** It has been said that it is impossible to hate a person if you are imaginative enough to notice the things that make them human. Do you think the poet, P.K. Page, agrees with this statement?

2. Suppose that a fellow student has written a play and has given it to you to read. Suppose that the following is the first page of the play.

The Chase

How's it going?

Well, I haven't seen you in a long time.

I've been away. My friend and I were in Vancouver for a while.

Is this your friend?

The name's Kelly.

Chris.

That's a nice jacket.

A friend gave it to me.

Vancouver's a nice place.

Yeah, it's too bad you had to leave.

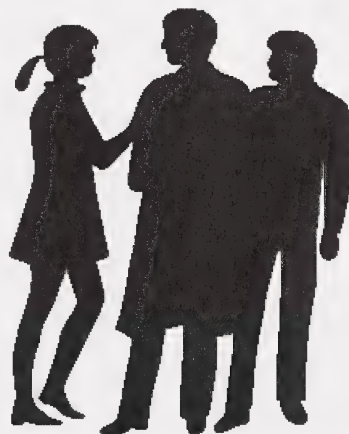
Somebody's after me.

Why? You in trouble?

Don't tell anyone –

What?

Based on what you know about the differences between a story and a playscript, why would a reader have great difficulty understanding this play?



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Extra Help.

Enrichment

Do one or both of the following questions.

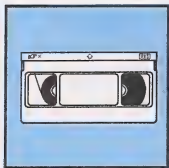
1. Suppose that you are fifty years old. Write, in dialogue form, a conversation you might have with your son or daughter about some problem he or she is having. Afterwards, with a partner read through your dialogue. Think not just of the words but of what the scene will look like. What do the characters do onstage? After reading through the dialogue several times, try tape recording it. If you are really ambitious, you might want to videotape it.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

2. a. If you look through your textbook *Accelerate*, you will notice there are no illustrations. Suppose that the editor is planning a second edition and is looking for interesting illustrations. Choose one of the works studied so far and create a picture that you think best sums up the work.

OR

- b. If you don't feel like drawing, try writing a poem that you think would fit well in a section called "Understanding Yourself – Past, Present, and Future."



3. If you have an interest in Canadian history or feel that you want to continue to explore the challenges that members of minority groups often experience in a society, you may wish to view the 24-minute video, *Mrs. Murakami – Family Album*. The video is produced by Yantra Walker and is distributed by Canadian Filmmakers Distribution West. In the video, an elderly Japanese-Canadian woman tells her family's history to her teenage granddaughter.
 - a. After viewing the video, explore your thoughts and emotions. As a prewriting activity, freewrite, cluster, or brainstorm a list of your feelings, ideas, and impressions.

- b. Respond to this video in the form of a haiku poem, or concrete poem, or any other form of poetry.

For comments and helpful suggestions, refer to the Appendix, Section 3: Enrichment.

Conclusion

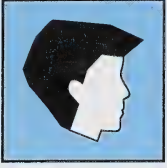
In this section, you began by examining the other of the two written forms – poetry. You then became familiar with the three levels of comprehension and applied them to different poems. Finally, you read and studied a play, and learned about the differences between a play and other kinds of fiction.

Most of the works you read in this section brought together different generations. In these works, past lives were re-opened and re-examined in the light of new experiences, so that new understanding could be gained. To understand a person's life, whether real or imaginary, you must understand the past as well as the present.

ASSIGNMENT

In your Assignment Booklet complete the assignment for this section.

Module Summary




Now that you have reached the end of this module you should be familiar with the following concepts:

- the importance of character
- the need for a character to want something
- the three types of conflict
- the techniques of visual communication (in particular, the choices the visual artist must make in creating his or her work)
- the difference between fiction and non-fiction
- the difference between biography and autobiography
- why a writer may choose different means (fiction or non-fiction) to convey the same message
- the different levels of meaning: understanding why different readers will interpret a work in different ways
- the purpose, format, and appropriate tone of a personal letter
- what poetry is and the importance of poetry as a way of conveying the poet's feelings

FINAL MODULE ASSIGNMENT

In your Assignment Booklet complete the final module assignment for this module.

Appendix

	Glossary
	Activities
	Extra Help
	Enrichment

Glossary

Anecdote	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a short story about an interesting event
Autobiography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a story of a person's life, written by that person
Biography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a story of a person's life written by another person
Characterization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the portrayal of fictional characters in a way that allows the reader to perceive them as living beings
Concrete poetry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• poetry resembling its subject matter
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the struggle between the main character and an opposing force
Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• an organized composition that develops one or more ideas or impressions
Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• literature which tells of imaginary events, places, experiences, or people
Flashback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• returning to a previous point in time
Haiku	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a rhymeless three-line poem having five syllables in the first and third lines and seven in the second line
Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the overall feeling produced in the reader by a piece of literature or a picture
Narrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the teller of the story The narrator is not necessarily the author, but can be a character in the story.
Non-fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• literature which tells of actual events, places, experiences, and people
Playwright	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the author of a play
Point of view	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the position from which something is observed or considered
Prose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ordinary written or spoken language

Purpose in writing

- the reason for writing – to entertain, to persuade, to inform, to explain, or to describe

Stage directions

- details in italics that help the reader and actors of a play to understand the characters and the action

Tone

- the author or speaker's attitude toward a subject or audience, reflected in the choice of words and emphasis

Suggested Answers

Section 1: Activity 1

1. The penguin in the middle is exhibiting unusual behaviour for a penguin. All of the other penguins look the same – slumped bodies, eyes and beaks straight ahead. But the penguin in the middle is trying to rise above the others. His (or her?) head is tilted upwards, his flippers are reaching for the sky. The most interesting thing about him, of course, is that he is singing – and not just any song, but one that speaks of individuality and freedom: “I Gotta Be Me.”
2. The title “Running with Marty” may have provided you with these clues:
 - The name of one of the characters is Marty, and he is running.
 - Another character is running with Marty.
3. Here are questions that a student had after completing question 2. You may have others.
 - Who is the character who is running with Marty?
 - Why are they running?
 - Are they running in a race?
 - Are they running toward something or from something?
 - What is the relationship between the characters?
 - How old is Marty? How old is the other character?
 - Are there any other characters in the story?
 - Where does the story take place?

Section 1: Activity 2

1. Your responses may vary from those that follow. Do you agree or disagree with the following responses?
 - a. Elizabeth’s father appears twice in the story. He reads his paper (“he’s always reading”) and he “glowers” over his dinner. He doesn’t seem to have much contact with, or interest in, Elizabeth. Perhaps he is too tied up in his own problems, having gone through several different relationships since his marriage ended.
 - b. Valdeen says, “Elizabeth, you are one dumb kid. If you let that nice boy hitchhike back to the city, you are going to hate yourself for a long time.” Valdeen seems to think Elizabeth is a smart person, but mixed-up because she is too busy feeling sorry for herself. Therefore, she needs help to sort out her problems, which Valdeen is only too happy to provide.
 - c. Marty says to Elizabeth, “Don’t you think I know what you’re scared of?” Marty thinks that Elizabeth is afraid that Marty will abandon her, the same way her mother abandoned her. Therefore, she would break off the relationship rather than risk an emotional commitment to Marty. This thought makes him angry enough to leave.

2. You might say that some of Elizabeth's statements about her parents are unfair, but then it appears, by the way her parents have been behaving since their separation, that they have been unfair to her, too.

You could say that Elizabeth is unfair to Valdeen. She says her father has "no taste" in dating Valdeen. She describes Valdeen in ways that make her seem stupid and silly: "[She] thinks Shakespeare is the name of a restaurant." Yet Valdeen seems like a nice person who likes Elizabeth and tries to help her sort out her problems with Marty.

Elizabeth also seems to treat Marty unfairly. Without any warning, she tells him rather coldly that she wants to break up and that she has been thinking about it for a long time. Marty seems very hurt by her news. Perhaps Elizabeth could have been a little more sensitive to his feelings when she told him.

3. There is no right or wrong answer here, only good explanations. For example, you could say that Elizabeth was right to get back together with Marty because he is a nice person who genuinely cares about her. He has a stable life, and might be able to help her sort out the problems she is facing in her own life.

On the other hand, you could say that she is too young to have a serious relationship. She already has enough problems in her home situation without asking for potential problems with a boyfriend. Perhaps what she needs more than a boyfriend are some sessions with a good counsellor, so that she can blow off some steam and begin feeling more positive about her life. Can you think of any other answers?

4. Again, there are many possibilities here. Elizabeth seems to envy Marty, because his parents are happily married. Perhaps what she really wants is for her parents to be back together again. Or perhaps she wants to feel as if they both still care about her.

Perhaps she feels unloved and wants somebody – her parents or Marty – to make her feel loved again. She seems to feel as if she is normal and everyone else – her parents, Valdeen – is crazy or stupid. Perhaps all she wants is to live in a sane, normal environment again. What do you think?

Section 1: Activity 3

1. Since the questions ask for an opinion, there are many possible answers. There is a famous saying, "Charity begins at home." So, too, does love and understanding. Everybody in Elizabeth's family seems mixed-up and concerned only with their own problems. All three of them seem to be running away from each other. If Elizabeth's home-life is unstable, chances are her life outside the home will be unstable too. It seems as if the entire family needs to sit down with a family counsellor, or a psychologist, or a minister and try to sort out their problems. The marriage may be over, but Elizabeth seems to feel that her parents have divorced her as well. Perhaps this is the problem that must be sorted out before Elizabeth can regain a positive, confident outlook. What are your thoughts?

2. The following are possible answers:
 - Person against environment: The rider appears to be caught in a snowstorm. The snow on the backs of the rider and the horse suggests that there is a strong wind coming from behind them. Ground and sky are blurred, suggesting near-whiteout conditions.
 - Person against himself or herself: Possibly the rider is struggling with cold and exhaustion and would probably prefer to stop and rest and wait out the blizzard. Yet, despite the discomfort, the rider presses on.
3. The landmark is probably the fence, which appears dimly out of the storm. Perhaps the rider has been lost in the storm and has finally glimpsed something he or she recognizes. The fence may mark the beginning of the rider's land. Perhaps he or she is nearly home.

Section 1: Activity 4

1. There are many words to describe the mood: dark, gloomy, lonely, quiet. If you like quiet, you may find the scene peaceful and relaxing. On the other hand, the dark lighting (it appears the photographer didn't use a flash), and the fact the girl is alone, may make you think the situation is a little threatening.
2. You can't see the girl's face, but her slouching posture suggests many possibilities. She could be relaxed, or carefree, or sloppy, or bored. She is playing by herself. Where are her friends? Is she an independent sort of person, or just a lonely one? What do you think?
3. If the photographer had used a flash, the scene would be better lit. The mood would be warmer, less threatening, more inviting. If there were other people around her, the girl wouldn't seem lonely. You might get the feeling of a happy, enjoyable, evening out.
4. When you face the person, you are equals. The person should appear normal. When you stand above, you are looking down on the person. The person will appear smaller, more vulnerable. When you lie on the ground to take the picture, it should appear as if your partner's head is touching the ceiling. The partner should seem larger and more powerful.

Section 1: Follow-up Activities

Extra Help

1.
 - a. Method B
 - b. Method C
 - c. Method A
2. Character B
3. Problem B

4.
 - a. person against himself or herself
 - b. person against other people
 - c. person against environment

Enrichment

1. You may be as creative as you like here, but the viewer should still be able to recognize the particular conflict being shown. For example, you might draw a picture of two arm wrestlers (person-against-person conflict), or a surfer (person against the environment), or of a worried-looking person in deep thought (person against self).
2. The following example is based on the imaginary film, *Fighting Back*.

Title of Film or TV Show

Fighting Back

Name of Character

Kurt Kennett

Character's Goal

to earn the respect of others: to show he's not a loser

Main Type of Conflict

Person against other people

Description of Conflict

Most townspeople are against Kurt; they think he robbed a store

Outcome of Conflict

Kurt helps track down the real thief; earns admiration and respect
from community

Section 2: Activity 1

1. The main difference between fiction and non-fiction is that a work of fiction is literature that tells of imaginary events, places, experiences, or people while a work of non-fiction is literature that tells of actual events, places, experiences, and people.
2. Try to sum up the person's life or his or her accomplishments in a single line. Feel free to have fun with your title. For example, if you were to write the biography of Ronald McDonald, the mascot of McDonald's Restaurants, you might sum up his life in this title: "They Called Him a Clown, but He Showed Them."
3. The author says that Thubten Samdup is bitter about the Western media's lack of interest in Tibet. Samdup says: "I think we Tibetans get so little coverage because of our principles of nonviolence. If I called the newspapers and said there was a bomb in a Metro station, suddenly they'd pay attention! People know about the Palestinians, the Afghans, the Armenians. But they don't know about us."
4. Answers will vary. The following is one possibility:

Even if the Chinese government succeeds in destroying Tibetan culture, Thubten Samdup will do his best to keep it alive in the rest of the world. He is determined that the children of Tibetan immigrants, most of whom have never set foot in Tibet, will learn their native language and customs. Even though he could live a comfortable life in Canada, he sacrifices personal gain to help others. That kind of spirit is always worth recognizing.

Section 2: Activity 2

1. a. Basically, Bissoondath is saying that racism isn't just a Canadian problem. It is found everywhere in the world, in every society.
b. Bissoondath says that racism "is also as American as apple pie, as French as croissants, as Jamaican as ackee, as Indian as aloo, as Chinese as chow mein, as...."

He says that racism can be put into the same category as rape and murder. All three are part of the dark side of human nature and are therefore part of all societies.

2. Bissoondath says this type of racism is based on "lack of experience" of a particular culture or group. When you don't know very much about a particular group, you tend to think of its members as being all the same. This can lead to stereotyping of people.
3. True racism (the worst type) is based on "wilful ignorance." In other words, the person doesn't want to know any more about the group. Such people are content with their stereotypes. They don't want to find out if there is actually any truth in what they think. They don't want to think of the particular group as people with individual differences.

4. In his opinion, it is a minority group practising racial discrimination against all other groups. It is no less unfair, he believes, than if Canadian television broadcast “The White Miss Canada Pageant.”
5. Many things frighten Sheila upon her arrival in Canada, mainly because she is not used to them. For example, she sees doors with no handles that somehow open by themselves. The people in uniform make her uncomfortable. At Customs, the questions about plants and food make her feel like a smuggler. She has never seen so many people with white faces. You could say she is suffering from culture shock.
6. Even though she is in Canada, Sheila’s thoughts are still in Trinidad. She has left her home, a world she could understand, to come to a strange new world. In particular, she feels guilty that no one will be left at home to tend her mother’s grave. Why doesn’t she tell these thoughts to Annie? Perhaps she feels Annie wouldn’t understand. Perhaps Annie, having lived in Canada for two years, seems strange to Sheila, too.
7. Answers here will vary, but Annie’s advice to Sheila could be summed up this way: Stick to your own kind. You’ll never be accepted as Canadian by the white majority in Canada. You may think of yourself as a coloured person from Trinidad, but in Canada you are a black person from the West Indies. You can only trust other black West Indians.
8. Sheila says to Annie, “But it sound like if...all you hiding from the other people here.” In other words, instead of trying to break down racial barriers, it seems as if Annie is putting up barriers of her own.
9. Here is a partial list of differences between Bissoondath’s article and short story. Have you thought of any other differences?

Article	Short Story
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no characters • not as personal as the short story • no dialogue • the facts and opinions are told to the reader directly • grammatically correct standard English is used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has characters • personal – Sheila tells her own story • the story relies heavily on dialogue to show reader what is going on • the story is told in nonstandard English (The reader experiences the story through Sheila’s dialect.)

Section 2: Activity 3

There are many possible “life lessons” here. These are some possibilities: Everyone needs someone to give him or her the benefit of the doubt. Or: It is important to look at people as individuals and not lump them together as, for example, “thieving kids.” Or: Perhaps Mr. Ford wanted to give the boy a chance to prove to himself once and for all that he was not a thief. Or: Perhaps it was Mr. Ford’s way of saying, “The past is forgotten.” Can you think of any other “lessons”?

Section 2: Activity 4

Did you find it helpful to brainstorm a list, freewrite, or cluster before beginning to write your letter? Did your letter include the following items?

- ☐ a heading including your address and the date
- ☐ an appropriate salutation
- ☐ a new paragraph for each new idea
- ☐ an appropriate closing
- ☐ your name signed at the bottom
- ☐ proper punctuation

It’s a good idea to proofread your letter when you are finished and correct any errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Frequent errors tend to confuse or distract the reader.

Have someone else read your letter. Does this person feel that you need to revise anything to improve clarity? Did this person spot some minor errors that you missed when you proofread your letter?

If you wrote a letter to an actual relative or friend, why don’t you mail it? Who knows, maybe you’ll get a letter back!

Section 2: Follow-up Activities

Extra Help

1. Here are some of the things that the writer should consider when working on an improved version of the biography of Calvin Smith:

In a biography, the author should make the subject interesting to the reader. In this example, the reader never becomes interested in Calvin Smith because the reader doesn’t get to know much about him. The writer doesn’t quote anything Calvin says because he wasn’t able to interview him. In a biography, the reader should feel that he or she knows and understands the subject. Here, Calvin Smith remains a stranger.

2. Whitney is right. Many readers seem to think a story should have only one definite meaning. But a story can mean different things to different readers. Each reader brings different backgrounds, beliefs, and abilities to bear on a piece of literature. As a result, a work can be interpreted in many different ways.

Enrichment

1. With this exercise, try to share your work with others. Seek a response from your audience. You may start a lively debate. Perhaps your ideas will build on theirs.
2. Here you might work with your knowledge of stereotyping. Have you experienced or witnessed examples of people putting other people in boxes according to race, or sex, or language, or physical disability? Perhaps you could work one of these examples into your dialogue.

You may want to have fun with the assignment and with proud Canadian attitudes. Think of some of the qualities that are valued in the Canadian workplace. Now apply for a job in an imaginary country where those qualities are not valued – in fact, they are looked on as a drawback. What would your working day be like?

3. How did you organize your writing? Did you first brainstorm a list of ideas, feelings, or impressions? Did you start by clustering? Did you freewrite?

Could you empathize with either or both of the girls? Did you experience a situation similar to theirs? You may like to share your finished letter with someone else to find out how effectively you have communicated your thoughts. If you are unsure of the proper format of a personal letter, you may want to review the appropriate parts of Section 2 or you may want to consult your handbook.

4. After viewing the video, did you feel that you had learned something new about the immigrant experience? Did you find that you can better understand and appreciate the problems and difficulties faced by people from a different cultural background who come to a new and different land? Did any part of this video open your eyes or make you see things from another point of view?

Imagine yourself as a newcomer to a strange, new country and culture. Do you think that the stories that you have to tell about your experiences and perceptions would be much different from those expressed in the video?

Do you know a newcomer to Canada? Perhaps you could interview this person about his or her experiences and perceptions about Canada. If you like, you may want to share your Journal entry with this person. Perhaps this person can readily identify with what you have written. Perhaps this person can provide insights that can help you understand better the immigrant experience.

Section 3: Activity 1

1. Who can predict why a student likes or dislikes something – especially poetry? Students sometimes voice concerns about poetry similar to these:
 - “It’s too hard to understand.”
 - “There are too many difficult words.”
 - “Every word seems to carry two or three different meanings.”
 - “Why can’t poets just say what they mean instead of using a lot of similes and metaphors?”

Liking poetry is a lot like trying a new food. Sometimes, you have to try it several times before you begin to appreciate it. The more poems you read, the more likely it is that you will like poetry.

2. It appears the poet wrote the poem to express his feelings about a rite of passage that didn’t quite go as planned. The poet says he is emotional – he calls himself “maudlin” (overly-sentimental) and “almost blubbering” (crying) as he thinks about the experience. The poet feels guilty about what happened. He realized drinking a first beer was a big moment for his son and he let him down. He kept all the cold bottles for his guests and gave his son an undrinkable warm one. Afterwards, he feels bad for what he has done – he feels he has committed “petty treason” by choosing his friends’ needs over his son’s.
3. Being allowed to drink beer was a big moment for the son. By getting his father’s permission, he was being accepted as an adult by his father. But the rite of passage was spoiled: the beer was warm and undrinkable. That was the imperfection. The son put it back without telling his father and went to bed. A proud moment turned into a disappointing one.

Section 3: Activity 2

1. The boy on the bike is white (“caucasian”). It seems he is prejudiced against the poet and her daughter and he taunts them. The poet is reminded of the time when she was eight years old and experienced racial prejudice. The “big white boys” crowded her off the mountain path, causing her to run in fear into the woods.
2. There are many possible questions that could test literal understanding. The following are examples:

Why was the poet afraid of woodticks? (They burrowed into the scalp and could only be removed with hot needles.) What was the attitude of many Canadians toward Japanese people when the poet was eight years old? (They regarded the Japanese as enemies.)

3. The poem appears to take place in Saskatoon because the poet attempts to reassure her daughter by saying, “There are no Woodticks in Saskatoon.” The poet’s incident took place in the mountains near the old abandoned mining town of Slocan, in south-eastern British Columbia. (This is one of the places where Japanese-Canadians were interned during World War II.)
4. In both cases, the girls were made to fear white boys. The daughter is made to fear the “gibberish” the boy speaks: in the mother’s case, she was made to fear the physical threat of the boys who forced her off the path. In both cases, the boys seem to represent the power of racial prejudice. But for the poet, the fear was worse – she had a choice between the boys on the path and the woodticks in the forest. She suffered no matter where she went.
5. The man was angry when he entered the store.
6. The evidence that the storekeeper presents makes the father slowly believe that his son actually did steal. The poet presents the reader with a picture of the evidence, like a hangman’s noose, slowly choking the appearance of innocence out of the son – at least in the father’s mind.
7. Circumstantial evidence is evidence that suggests the person has done what he or she is accused of doing. For example, the storekeeper may have suspected the boy had stolen a video game. He did not actually see him steal it. Suppose, however, the storekeeper stopped him at the door and had him empty his pockets and discovered a video game, still in the wrapper, with the price tag still attached. This would be considered circumstantial evidence of theft.
8. The father has learned something about his son that he finds very disturbing. The father feels “sick and alone and afraid.” His son is being exposed publicly as a thief and the father feels responsible. Perhaps he feels as if all his love and help and advice has come to nothing. He did not teach his son to be a thief and yet his son has stolen. He feels “as if/an unseen hand had slapped him.” He suddenly doesn’t know what to do or to think. He just wants to hide.
9. Literally, the lines say: Such a scene must take place exactly the same way in real life. It couldn’t be any different from the way the poet has described it. On an interpretive level, you could say the poem is less about shoplifting than about having your assumptions upset. The father assumed his son was much like himself, law-abiding and honest, and now his faith in his son has been badly shaken. Perhaps he wonders if all his other assumptions are false as well. At such a moment, how could any person not feel “sick and alone and afraid”?

Section 3: Activity 3

1. a. The daughter doesn’t want to sleep. She thinks up endless excuses to keep her mother nearby (fear of monsters, needing a glass of water). The mother refuses to be moved by any of the excuses, but finally gives in to the daughter’s request to sing her a song.

- b. The daughter resents being made to feel different because she is left-handed. Her mother's response is that she must learn to adjust to the world and work harder to fit in. This does not make the daughter feel any better.
 - c. The daughter wants something, but the mother says she can't have it. The daughter wants to explain to her why she must have it, but the mother has made her decision. She refuses to have her authority questioned.
 - d. The daughter has been out on a date; the mother thinks she has been out too late doing things she shouldn't be doing. The argument continues and blends into the next scene.
 - e. It appears as if the argument has continued non-stop for five years. The argument has reached a climax: the mother says the daughter has done something terrible. The daughter says it's not so terrible, but then she breaks down and cries. The two women look at each other for the first time in the play. The mother softens: It's not so terrible, she decides. "We're alive, aren't we? We'll work it out."
 - f. The daughter is now a mother and she is concerned that the mother is spoiling her son. The mother disagrees, but then later agrees and smiles when her daughter calls her an "old softie."
 - g. The mother is too frail to look after herself and must now live with the daughter. She worries that she is a burden, but her daughter assures her she is not. At the end of the play, it is the mother's turn to resist going to sleep.
2. First of all, the cubes give the actors somewhere to sit. Second, they help to represent the feelings between the two characters. When things are tense between the mother and daughter, the boxes are piled between them to show lack of communication. When they begin to communicate again, the boxes are taken down. Finally, shifting the boxes provides a break between scenes; it signals to the audience that time is passing and the characters are aging.
 3. When the daughter is sixteen, communication seems to break down almost completely. The mother says that the daughter thinks she knows everything, and the daughter thinks the mother should leave her alone. Neither person seems to listen to the other.
 4. The boxes are piled up to form a wall between the mother and daughter. Neither one can see the other because of the wall, and so they shout their lines at the wall instead.
 5. The play begins with the mother trying to get the daughter to go to sleep, and it ends with the daughter trying to get her aged mother to sleep. The play also suggests that people end up sounding like their parents. For example, the daughter sounds exactly like her mother once did when she tries to get her own child to go to sleep.

Section 3: Follow-up Activities

Extra Help

1. a. The poet compares her enemy with a plum.
 - b. Think of adjectives to describe a plum: small, round, pulpy, juicy, squishy. When you think of a plum you probably don't think of anything that suggests anger, or violence, or danger – quite the opposite, in fact.
 - c. Since the question asks for an opinion, answers will vary. The following is one possible answer:

This comment suggests people aren't really very different – inside we are all pretty much the same. The poet, P.K. Page, seems to agree with this comment in her poem. By comparing her enemy to a fruit, she realizes she can't hate something capable of looking so silly. By using her imagination, she is able to get beneath the surface of her own hate and fear. And what does she find in her enemy's plum-like appearance? Only the foolish-funny face of humanity – a figure of laughter, not anger.

2. A play needs stage directions so the reader can tell where the scene is taking place, and what the setting and the characters are like. As the scene progresses, stage directions tell the reader what the characters are doing (*He opens the drawer and takes out a gun.*). As well, the playwright should put the character's name before the speech, so the reader knows who is speaking. In this scene, the reader can't tell who is saying what – the reader can't even tell if the speakers are male or female.

Enrichment

1. You might want to ask your partner if he or she agrees with everything the fifty-year-old character says. Do you find that you are suddenly being fairer to the older generation and less fair to your own?
2. In your Assignment Booklet, you will be asked to revise and submit a good copy of one of your Journal entries. You may want to add in your creative work here to one of your previous Journal responses.
3. Whatever form of poetry you chose to write, you likely took many of the most powerful words, images, and ideas from the brainstorming, clustering, or freewriting you did after viewing the video. Poetry tends to convey a lot of emotion or a lot of sensory images with relatively few words compared with prose. If you had some difficulty beginning your haiku poem, you should refer to page 83 in *Fast Forward*. Did you find it easy or hard to write a haiku about your response to *Mrs. Murakami–Family Album*?

If you wrote a concrete poem, what was its shape? One student wrote it in the shape of a heart representing what she felt was one of Mrs. Murakami's most impressive characteristics – her capacity for forgiveness. Another student felt that the shape of a tear drop was appropriate.

Did you give your poem a title?

If you can, have a partner read your poem and you read your partner's. Discuss your feelings and reactions about each other's poems. What did you learn from your partner's comments about your poem? What did you learn from reading your partner's poem? Something about poetry? Something about the poet?



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